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PCTOOLS – issue 21

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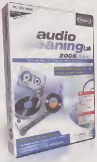

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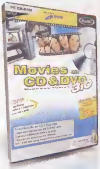

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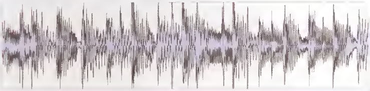

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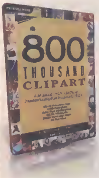

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*Keith Cameron - Road Safety Consultant

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†Refers to previous version 2004

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For the avoidance of doubt the free blank DVD offer will not be available after the 31st March 2006

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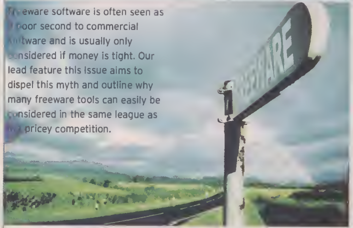
The truth about freeware 8



Freeware software is often seen as a poor second to commercial software and is usually only considered if money is tight. Our lead feature this issue aims to dispel this myth and outline why many freeware tools can easily be considered in the same league as its pricey competition.

No Install Linux 15

If you're drawn to the appeal of freeware software, how do you feel about a full, free operating system? With this month's No Install Linux CD, you can try out the power and functionality of Knoppix Linux without installing a new OS or compromising Windows. Just pop the CD in your drive, reboot, and away you go!

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- Complete of
- Web brows
- MP3 and vi
- Image-editi
- System re
- Freeware

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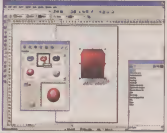
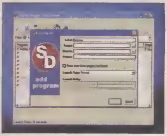
- CD/DVD BURNERS
- PHOTO EDITORS
- AUDIO & VIDEO TOOLS

Windows....................20

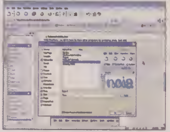
The Windows operating system comes complete with an ample selection of system tools and productivity applications, but you don't need to dip into your pocket to bolster your software roster. We pick out some of the best free office tools, Windows add-ons, system utilities and much more!

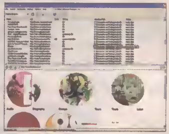




Internet 29

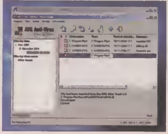
There's no shortage of freeware Internet and email programs on the market, but that only makes the job of picking out the best of them that much harder. To save you the trouble, we've narrowed down the field to the Internet browsers, email clients and anti-spam tools that represent the best the freeware world has to offer.





Security & antivirus...........36

Viruses, spyware, scams and hackers are threats that can't be ignored when using PCs and the Internet. Just because you don't have the budget for commercial security software doesn't mean you need to do without though, as we aim to prove with our selection of the most reliable freeware security tools available.



WINGUARD PRO 2004

This window is blocked:
System Properties

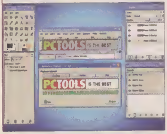
Click here to unblock it

Audio & video 42

Media Player and Movie Maker are both excellent tools that come free with Windows. You don't need to settle for these tools just because your finances are tight though. We pick out some of the best free media players, conversion tools, sound and video editors, music creation suites and more.

Graphics. 50

If you've spent a fortune on a digital camera, the last thing you'll want to do is shell out still more for software to optimise and enhance your pictures. With the programs in our Graphics section this issue, you don't have to, as we've uncovered some superb free tools catering to all aspects of image creation, management and editing.



Miscellaneous 56

Whilst commercial software developers may stick to creating programs they know will appeal to a wide market, freeware developers can cater to more obscure needs without worrying about how this will affect sales. This makes freeware software incredibly diverse, as our Miscellaneous section goes to prove.

Competition winners

Thanks to everyone who entered our competitions in issue 19 of PC Tools. The winners are printed below and your prizes will be with you soon.

Norton Internet Security
Patrick Mullisan, Co. Fermanagh; Albert Miller, London; Dennis Riddell, Nottinghamshire; Ramon Cadavicio, Watford; Jean Payne, Oldham; Mark Cottle, Wiltshire; Jaroslav Michna, Reading; Darrell Rawsthorne, Preston; Brian Thomas, Chesterfield; Shaun Anderson, Tyne and Wear

Microsoft Office Professional Edition 2003
IM Tasker, Devon; Ian Paterson, Ayrshire; MG Vertannes, Swindon; John Roden, Birmingham; Michael Thomas, Caithness

Microsoft Biometric Optical Desktop Set
Jon Greaves, Walsall; DE Marshall, Reading; Mark Street, Peterborough; Steve Rose, Liverpool; JK Barrington-Wright, Aberdeenshire

The best things in life are free!

Welcome to another superb, program-packed edition of PC Tools. As you can't fail to have noticed from the magazine's cover, our theme for this issue is freeware, which means that every one of the tools collected for this issue is free. They're not just any old freeware programs either, we've done our utmost to bring you only the very best freeware tools available.

Of course, it would be remiss of us to cover free software without touching on the subject of Open Source software and Linux. Given that many Windows users are wary of trying out a completely new operating system, we've come up with the perfect solution for our second CD. The No Install Linux CD is exactly that – a complete operating system (Knoppix Linux 3.7) that runs straight from the disc. This means you can try out the OS – including its 900 built-in programs, such as office suites, graphics editors and games – without needing to install the system, mess around with partitions or endanger your Windows system or data. There's no reason not to try it.

We hope that you find the software on this month's coverdiscs useful, and as ever, you'll find reviews of every program and essential guides to using them in the magazine.

Gavin Burrell
Editor

Getting started with the CD 6
Learn how to make the most of the coverdisc browser.

Subscriptions 48
Get every issue of PC Tools delivered direct to your door.

Websites 60
A selection of useful and informative websites.

Back issues 62
Complete your PC Tools collection today!

Complete listing 65
Find out on which page a given utility is featured.

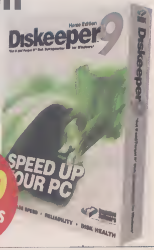
Next issue 66
Learn about what we have planned for the next issue of PC Tools.

Competition

Win a copy of Diskeeper 9.0 Home Edition 41

We've got 10 copies of this powerful system maintenance application to give away. These usually retail for £23.99, but enter our competition and you could win one for free!

£240 worth of prizes to be won!



Getting started with the CD

Learn how to get the most from this issue's cover CD

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Problem solving

I insert the disc, it spins up, and then my PC freezes. Then things start crashing. What's going on?
It sounds like a faulty disc. These are very rare but do sometimes crop up. Return it to us and we'll happily supply a replacement – send it to:

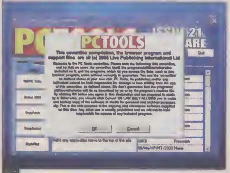
PC Tools magazine, Live
Publishing International,
Europa House, Adlington
Park, Macclesfield,
SK10 4NP, UK.

I keep getting errors saying that the browser program can't find 'browser.csv' or other files. However, I can access the folders on the CD using My Computer without any trouble.
Once again, this sounds like a faulty disc. See the instructions above about returning it for replacement.

The disc used to work fine but now doesn't. What's gone wrong?
It might be that the CD is dirty or has become scratched through mistreatment. Try placing it under a running cold water tap and gently rubbing the surface with a tissue to remove greasy stains. Examine it carefully for scratches and other blemishes. Please note that we cannot replace a disc which has been damaged through bad handling in this way.

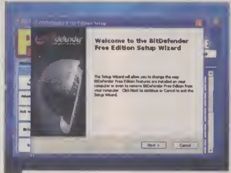
I installed an application and it doesn't work/crashes/is buggy!
Some applications work fine on most PCs but not on a small minority of computers. This is outside of the control of PC Tools. The best policy is to visit the website of the person or company responsible for that application. They're likely to know much more about any potential problems and might have a cure or workaround. Sometimes downloading the latest version of the application fixes the problem.

Getting started


PCTOOLS
OK
Cancel

This coverdisc compilation, the browser program and support files are all (c) 2006 Live Publishing International Ltd

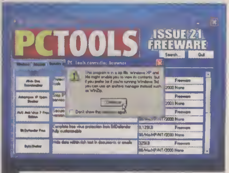
1 The disc should run automatically when you place it in your CD-ROM/DVD drive. If not, click Start/ Run and enter 'D:\browser.exe', assuming that 'D:' is the letter of your CD-ROM/DVD drive. The PC Tools browser will appear. Each of the tabs across the top corresponds to a section of the magazine.


defender
Next >
Cancel

Welcome to the BitDefender Free Edition Setup Wizard

The Setup Wizard will allow you to change the way BitDefender Free Edition features are installed on your computer or even to remove BitDefender Free Edition from your computer. Click Next to continue or Cancel to exit the Setup Wizard.

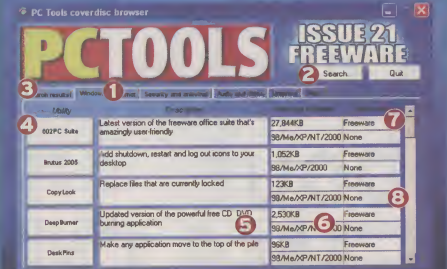
2 Select one of the tabs directly below the PC Tools logo. Then scroll down the list of applications using the scroll bar until you find something you're interested in. Click the program's name once. The installation will start although the browser will remain open behind it.


PCTOOLS
ISSUE 21 FREEWARE
Search...
Quit
PC Tools coverdisc browser
Freeware
BitDefender Free

This program is in a zip file. Windows XP and Me might enable you to view its contents but if you prefer (or if you're running Windows 9x) you can use an archive manager instead such as WinZip.

☐ Don't show this message again

3 Many of the programs on the disc are packed into .zip files. Windows XP and Me are able to open .zip files and show you the contents, although you can use a program like WinZip for this (see www.winzip.com). Sometimes you can install the software directly from the .zip archive.



Utility	Description		
602PC Suite	Latest version of the freeware office suite that's amazingly user-friendly	27,844KB 98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Freeware None
Brutus 2005	Add shutdown, restart and log out icons to your desktop	1,052KB 98/Me/XP/2000	Freeware None
Copy Look	Replace files that are currently locked	123KB 98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Freeware None
Deep Burner	Updated version of the powerful free CD DVD burning application	2,530KB 98/Me/XP/N…00	Freeware None
DeskPins	Make any application move to the top of the pile	96KB 98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Freeware None

1 Browser tabs The programs on the PC Tools CD are split into various categories, according to program type. If you're looking for security programs, for example, you'll find them under the Security tab.

2 Search If you're looking for a specific program or type of application, the easiest way to find it is by clicking the Search button and entering your search term.

3 Search results The results of your last search will be listed here – these may be programs from anywhere on the disc.

4 Program name As well as listing program names, these buttons can be clicked to install the related software (if in .exe or .msi format) or launch the relevant .zip archive.

5 Description This field provides a brief description of what the program does. In some cases, you will also find important information in this field, such as a website to visit to receive a program unlock code.

6 System This field lists the operating systems under which the relevant program should work. Although we try to provide accurate information, we cannot guarantee that a program works for a given OS even if listed here.

7 Program type Most of the programs on our coverdisc are either fully featured programs or freeware, which mean you can use them for as long as you like with no restrictions. Shareware software, on the other hand, can be trialled for a limited period only. After this period, you will need to register the software to continue using it.

8 Notes Any restrictions in the use of the software will be listed here. In the case of shareware programs, this may include the length of the trial period.

Coverdisc helpline

If you're having problems using the coverdisc program, please contact

01625 855 051

techsupport@livepublishing.co.uk

(Monday-Friday 10am-4pm)

Please note that this helpline is for coverdisc problems only and NOT for general technical support

Windows 95

Please note that we do not guarantee any of these programs will work under Windows 95. You should however find that a large proportion of 98-compatible programs also work under 95.

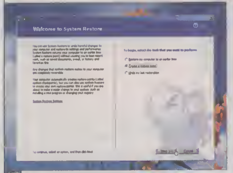
Disclaimer

Some of the programs on the PC Tools coverdisc have the potential to seriously damage your PC if used incorrectly. It is your responsibility to thoroughly research a program and its function before using or installing it. PC Tools, Live Publishing International and/or any associated company or individual cannot be held responsible for any problems arising from use of the coverdisc. **You install and use the programs on the disc at your own risk.**

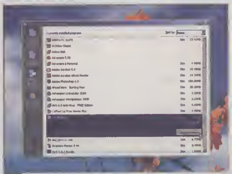
US disclaimer

US law only allows you to make one backup copy of any software or media, for personal and archival purposes only. This is the intended purpose of the copying and extracting software supplied on the coverdisc. Any other use is strictly prohibited and we will not be held responsible for misuse of any of the included programs on the disc.

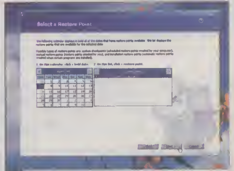
Remove programs



1 Before installing programs from the CD, it's wise to create a System Restore point. Click Start/ Programs/ Accessories/ System Tools/ System Restore. Click Create A Restore Point, and follow the wizard, giving the restore 'job' a name (something like "before installing tool on CD").



2 Once you're tired of any program, simply look for its entry under Start/ Programs and click the uninstall entry. If there isn't one, open the Windows Control Panel (Start/ Settings/ Control Panel), and double-click on the Add/Remove Programs entry. Then select the program from the list and click Remove.



3 If the uninstaller comes up with an error, you can use the System Restore point you created earlier. Just follow the steps above and choose to restore rather than create a new restore point. Try to avoid manually deleting the program files from your hard disk – this will probably cause problems.

Find out how the best of the freeware world measures up to commercial rivals

The truth about FREEWARE

Everybody likes to get something for nothing, and it's an almost instinctive reaction to hunt down bargains when you're out shopping. Two-for-one offers, half price deals and money off coupons are all successful marketing ploys to get us to buy more items, and it works. But, even with these offers, you still need to spend some money. Not in the software world though, and thanks to freeware you can kit out your PC with almost every type of program imaginable. No special offers, no reduced prices, just totally free software that doesn't set you back a penny.

Surely this free software doesn't come close to the performance of commercial contenders though, does it? Well, actually, yes it does. While commercial software still represents the most powerful and feature-packed around in most categories, many freeware alternatives boast more than enough power for many users, and in some cases, the freeware option may be a better solution altogether.

Here we're going to take a look at a collection of PC applications from both the commercial and freeware markets, and will compare each of them to see how they measure up. So, you'll be able to see if the free option is for you, or if you'll need to fork out the cash for the commercial title.

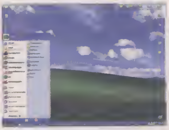
Windows XP vs. Linux

Windows XP is now the OS of choice for the majority of the PC-using public, not only because it comes pre-installed on 95% of PCs, but also because it's widely seen as the most flexible and user-friendly OS available. Windows may have its problems, but the fact is that it will run any program on any PC system with a very high level of compatibility. Windows is packed with features and applications including clerical tools such as Wordpad, Outlook Express and other essential additions like Internet Explorer, a range of system utilities, a media player and much, much more. But despite the ease of use and high level of performance of Windows, there's a rapidly growing community that has opted for the Open Source alternative to Microsoft's OS – Linux.

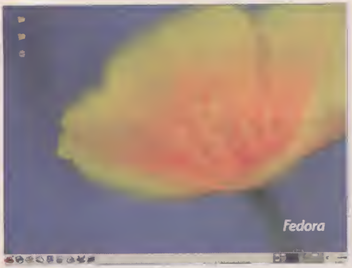
Linux operating systems come in many different forms, each developed by different entities. These include such versions such as Red Hat, Fedora, SUSE, Debian and even no install versions that run from CD such as the Debian-based Knoppix featured on CD2 this issue. Most of these distributions can be downloaded for free, though many are also sold as boxed copies, complete with hefty installation and usage guides.

Linux, while not quite as easy to get to grips with, can be every bit as powerful as Windows, and it's a remarkably fast OS, beating Windows in the speed stakes and having the added bonus of total control. Users can tailor the OS to their own liking, and should they possess the skills, can even dip into the source code in order to improve and alter the whole thing. A great benefit of Linux is also its improved virus record – hardly any viruses have been created that affect Linux and none are 'in the wild'.

The debate will rage for years to come between Windows and Linux users, and each fanatically supports their OS of choice. At the end of the day however, both systems have their own pros and cons. Windows is arguably the easier and more compatible option that supports most of the hardware currently available, whereas Linux is the faster and more resource friendly of the two and it demands far less system power in order to function. Of course, Windows is also very expensive, which gives Linux another big plus point. Bottom line, if you're new to PCs, we'd advise you stick with Windows, but if you're an advanced PC user who knows their stuff, you may want to give Linux a try.



Microsoft's Windows XP is the world's most popular operating system



Linux is the major alternative to Windows, and is growing in popularity

"THE DEBATE WILL RAGE FOR YEARS TO COME BETWEEN WINDOWS AND LINUX USERS, AND EACH FANATICALLY SUPPORTS THEIR OS OF CHOICE"

Windows XP
Price **£160 (Home Edition), £240 (Professional)**
Pros **Masses of features, easy to use, excellent support**
Cons **Too bloated for some, susceptible to viruses**
Contact **www.microsoft.com**

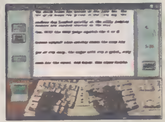
Linux
Price **Some are free, £30-40 for boxed distros**
Pros **Low resource usage, fully customisable, Open Source**
Cons **Not for the layman, not as widely supported**
Contact **See www.freeos.com for links**

Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing vs. MaxType LITE Typing Tutor

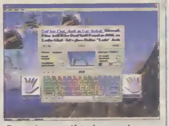
Improving your typing skills is always a good idea, if only to speed up every day emails. You can do this with a little self help and the right software.

Mavis Beacon's (www.mavisbeacon.com) range of typing tutors are well known commercial offerings that many people swear by. Using a well designed series of lessons and tests the software helps you to improve your typing abilities and will ensure you finally eliminate that old key hunting and pecking technique that many people employ.

One the free side of things we have MaxType LITE Typing Tutor (www.askmesoft.com). This is a free alternative that also uses various tests and lessons to help you get to grips with the keyboard. While reproducing a text document, you can use the application to refine your typing ability and can even record your past performances so you can compete with previous results to measure your progress.



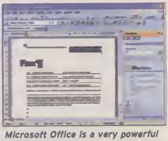
Mavis will show you the dos and don'ts of touch typing



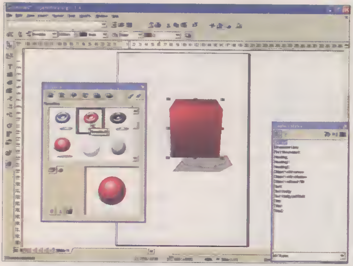
Record yourself and compete against your best performance in MaxType LITE Typing Tutor

Microsoft Office vs. OpenOffice.org

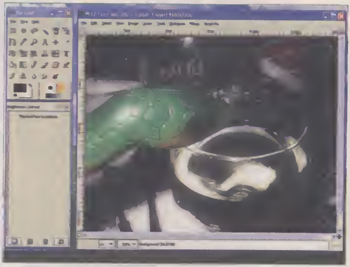
Not content with dominating the operating system market, Microsoft also holds the lion's share when it comes to clerical duties. Microsoft Office is a hugely popular suite both in the home and the workplace. When it comes to sheer power nothing can touch it, and household names like Word and Excel are the pinnacles of their respective areas. Office is as comfortable with a single home user as it is in a corporate environment, and thanks to its excellent document sharing functions and connectivity, working on large scale projects is easy. But, all this power comes at a steep price, and for many home users,



Microsoft Office is a very powerful office suite, but you'll need to pay a hefty price for it



OpenOffice.org is a free office suite and is perfect for most home users



The GIMP is a powerful, feature-packed and free image editor

this magnitude of tools simply isn't needed, which is where freeware comes in.

The best free alternative to Office has to be OpenOffice.org. This, like the Microsoft package, is a full office suite consisting of a word processor, spreadsheet tool and drawing package. These programs, while not all as powerful or in-depth as those featured in Office, are all more than enough for most home users. OpenOffice.org fully supports Office file extensions too (as well as a host of others), making importing an exporting easy. It even offers some functions which are lacking from Office, such as the ability to save files in .pdf format.

Both of these packages offer a wealth of options and tools, and while Microsoft's option is still by far the most powerful, OpenOffice.org is free, powerful and contains all the functions that many users will need.

Microsoft Office 2003
Price **£310 (Standard)**
Pros **Excellent document sharing abilities, plenty of features**
Cons **Very expensive, more complex than home users really need**
Contact **www.microsoft.com/office**

OpenOffice.org
Price **Free**
Pros **Everything most user will need, fast, Open Source, PDF options**
Cons **Not as powerful as Office, fewer advanced options**
Contact **www.openoffice.org**

Paint Shop Pro vs. The GIMP

Many commercial image-editing and creation programs are available, such as the extremely powerful Adobe Photoshop, and Jasc's more home user focused Paint Shop Pro.

Paint Shop Pro has changed quite radically in its latest incarnations, and now looks more like a simplified Photoshop than the earlier versions. But, this doesn't mean it's a simplified tool lacking in features. PSP packs in plenty of power. Using it you can create images from scratch using a wealth of drawing and effects tools, or you can scan in your own photos in order to add effects or to perform edits, such as removing red-eye. PSP's key feature however has always been its ease of use, and users of all abilities have found the application posesses a good learning curve, with the performance to match.

PSP is still expensive though, so if you're looking for an image editor you may want to consider The GIMP (GNU Image Manipulation Program). This image editor functions just like PSP in many ways, but for free. Employing an unusual floating window interface, instead of a single window, the program can be used to edit and create images and posesses a range of tools for this purpose. As it's an Open Source program, it's also updated on a regular basis, and the support for plug-ins makes the program even more flexible.

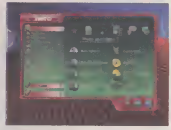
Paint Shop Pro has long been established as a very user-friendly image editor, but The GIMP is a very worthy contender to the commercial title and has all the tools you'd expect to see in any graphics application.

Paint Shop Pro 9
Price **£99.95**
Pros **User-friendly, excellent photo touch-up tools, versatile**
Cons **Biased to photo editing, complex interface**
Contact **www.jasc.com**

The GIMP
Price **Free**
Pros **Customisable interface, support for plug-ins, community driven**
Cons **Interface can be a little awkward, lacking some more powerful tools**
Contact **www.gimp.org**

> **"THIS IMAGE EDITOR FUNCTIONS JUST LIKE PSP IN MANY WAYS, BUT FOR FREE"**

Paint Shop Pro is amongst the best commercial image-editing applications



When it comes to flexibility, Nero simply can't be beaten

WinZip vs ZipGenius

Every PC user will come across .zip files at some point. These compressed archives are simply data files packed into smaller single items for distribution, and as well as .zip files, there are a whole range of other types of compression archive around. To access these, or to create you own, you need an archive program such as WinZip (www.winzip.com). This is a hugely popular application that can read and write archives, and lets you save precious space. You can archive data to other volumes and can even create self-extracting .exe files for easy distribution.

You don't have to pay for this privilege though, and ZipGenius (www.zipgenius.it) is a gratis alternative to WinZip. It can also access and create archives, and supports a whole range of different file types, such as .rar, .ace and even ISO files (disc images).

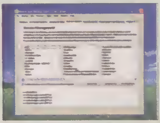
Norton Ghost vs. Simply Safe Backup

Given the number of damaging viruses in existence and the ever-present threat of hardware failure, backing up data has never been so important. Norton Ghost (**www.symantec.com**) provides one way of doing this, and by creating a full image of your entire system, you can not only make sure your data is secure, but also your system settings and critical files. This 'ghost' image can be stored on a disc for restoration later, and your current backup image can be automatically updated with any new changes.

The free Simply Safe Backup (**www.simplysafebackup.com**) takes a different route to backing up data, and can be used to back up your important files for safe keeping. You can back up the files you wish, and can set up automatic backup procedures that run at specific times. Unlike some other options, Simply Safe can encrypt your archived data. So even if your information is stolen, no-one will be able to access it.

Ghost Utilities
SystemWorks

Norton Ghost enables you to create a copy of your entire system



Create tailored backups of your data with Simply Safe Backup

Nero vs. DeepBurner

Nero is one of the best commercial CD/DVD-burning applications around, and will perform any CD and DVD creation task you wish. It can create audio and data discs, enhanced audio CDs, backups, photo albums, and more. It's become a staple PC accessory, and the majority of PC users with CD/DVD writers now employ its services on a regular basis.

DeepBurner however will perform many of the same functions, and can produce almost all types of CD and DVD. It bears a similar drag-and-drop interface, making it an easy task to create CD compilations. It doesn't posses the same level of system integration as Nero, but it's a little faster because of it.

Another free alternative is ExpressBurn (www.nch.com.au). This isn't quite as powerful as DeepBurner, but is a very simple and speedy burning option. If you only want to burn some data files to a disc for storage, this is a good program to use.

Nero

Price **£50**

Pros **Supports every CD/DVD project around, totally dependable**

Cons **More features than most will need, sluggish performance at times**

Contact **www.nero.com**

DeepBurner

Price **Free**

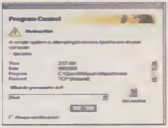
Pros **Simple and easy to use, speedy operation**

Cons **Not as powerful as Nero, prone to some glitches**

Contact **www.deepburner.com**

Norton Personal Firewall vs. Jetico Personal Firewall

Having a firewall installed and active on your PC is essential if your system is connected to the Internet, and so you'll want to make sure you have a suitable program in place, guarding your computer from intrusion. Norton Personal Firewall is an effective security tool for this task and will bestow your system with a high level of system security. With the added backing from Symantec, and the constant updates and support from the dedicated program team, you'll be in safe hands.



Keep out unwanted intruders with Norton Personal Firewall

Jetico Personal Firewall is a free Internet security tool that will ensure your PC remains safe while online. Like Norton it has varying security levels you can use, and it will effectively stop programs and users accessing your system. However, while Norton is a fairly resource hungry program, Jetico is a much lighter application, taking up less of your system's RAM and processing power.

Norton Personal Firewall

Price **£45**

Pros **High level of protection, superb product support**

Cons **Can cause problems with other virus applications**

Contact **www.symantec.com**

Jetico Personal Firewall

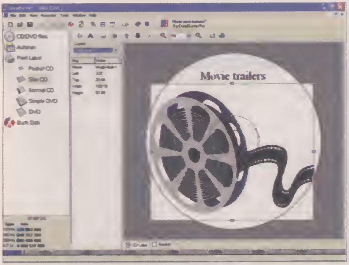
Price **Free**

Pros **Reliable firewall protection, streamlined for optimal system performance**

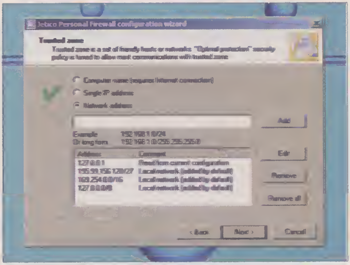
Cons **lacks the support of others, not as user-friendly as Norton**

Contact **www.jetico.com**

> **"HAVING A FIREWALL INSTALLED AND ACTIVE ON YOUR PC IS ESSENTIAL IF YOUR SYSTEM IS CONNECTED TO THE INTERNET"**



DeepBurner also lets you create CD labels and case inlays



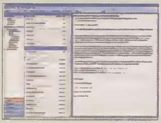
Jetico Personal Firewall lets you keep your system safe and save money

Microsoft Outlook vs. Mozilla Thunderbird

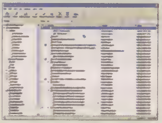
Having a good email application is now just as vital as your security tools or operating system, such is the importance of the digital communication medium. You need a program that not only sends/receives email and manages contacts, but you'll need a good way of storing old messages, and decent mail filters to prevent spam.

Microsoft's premier email client is Outlook (www.microsoft.com). This is the high-end relation of Outlook Express, the client that comes with Windows. When it comes to storing, viewing and managing mails, even huge numbers, Outlook just can't be beaten. The well-designed interface means you can view your inbox, read messages and navigate folders without even opening a separate window. Add to this the organiser functions, in-depth calendar (with reminders), integration into Office, and overall speed, and you have an almost flawless package.

Mozilla Thunderbird (www.mozilla.org) is a free mail client from the makers of the popular alternative Internet browser Firefox. Looking and behaving like a cross between Outlook and Outlook Express, Thunderbird is a great client that manages mail very well. Unlike Outlook though, Thunderbird has a dependable built-in newsgroup client, so you can subscribe to your favourite groups and access mail all from one package.



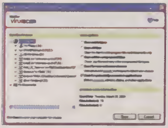
Outlook is Microsoft's most powerful email application



Thunderbird offers some options Outlook lacks, such as newsgroup support

McAfee VirusScan vs. AVG Anti-Virus Free Edition

A big name in PC security, McAfee's virus killing application is suitably popular and has won many awards over time. Offering very accurate on-demand scanning and a constantly updated database of virus definitions, backed up by heuristic scanning procedures and user information warnings, this is very effective stuff. Sadly though, McAfee is known to be very sluggish and can make your PC take a fairly steep performance hit.

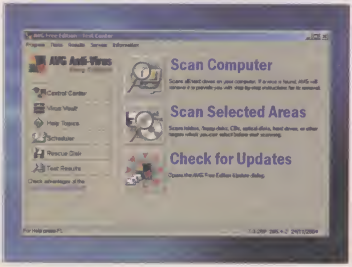


One of the best security tools available, McAfee's VirusScan is a dependable program

AVG Anti-Virus Free Edition on the other hand is an option with much more system respect, and while it also keeps a careful watch on your system, it does this without interfering. AVG is also updated on a daily basis and comes with a boot up scanner that checks for viruses during startup.

McAfee VirusScan
Price **£35**
Pros **Constant updates, very accurate and efficient scanning**
Cons **Very slow, high system resource use, too many pop-ups**
Contact **www.mcafee.com**

AVG Anti-Virus Free Edition
Price **Free**
Pros **Updated daily, little user interference, email scanner**
Cons **Lacks some of the power of commercial applications**
Contact **www.grisoft.com**



AVG is the most popular free antivirus program available

Watch TV through your PC from the comfort of your sofa with Microsoft's Media Centre

"AVG ANTI-VIRUS FREE EDITION ON THE OTHER HAND IS AN OPTION WITH MUCH MORE SYSTEM RESPECT, AND WHILE IT ALSO KEEPS A CAREFUL WATCH ON YOUR SYSTEM, IT DOES THIS WITHOUT INTERFERING"

Microsoft Windows XP Media Center Edition vs. MediaPortal

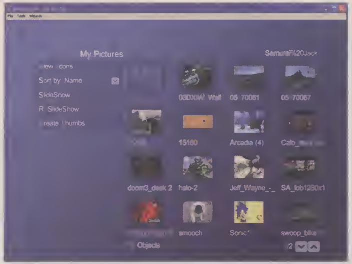
Media Centre PCs have become quite popular over the last six months. Many new PCs will come fully equipped with a range of multimedia tools that can enable your system to view DVDs or play TV channels. To aid this transition, you'll want to grab hold of some dedicated software for this role.

Microsoft has released a special version of Windows XP, dubbed Media Centre Edition,

McAfee Quickclean vs. DustBuster XP

Keeping your PC clean and tidy is a good idea, and allowing an excess of junk files and unwanted data to build up will only take up space and cause system slowdown. McAfee QuickClean (www.mcafee.com) is a commercial system cleaning tool, which can be used to find and delete any unnecessary and unwanted files, saving you drive space. It can also clean up your Internet history and temp files, as well as enabling the secure deletion of files so they cannot be restored.

DustBuster XP (www.wide.it) also performs many of these functions. Using a special procedure, the program can automatically search through your system in order to identify possible junk, meaning you don't have to babysit the title as it works. Just launch the application and let it work, simple.


My Pictures
SamuraI%20Jack
View Icons
Sort by Name
SlideShow
R SlideShow
Create Thumbs
03DXW Wall
05 70081
05 70087
15180
Arcadia (4)
doom3_desk 2
halo-2
Jeff_Wayne_-_
SA_fob1280x1
smooch
Sonic1
swoop_bike
Objects
/2

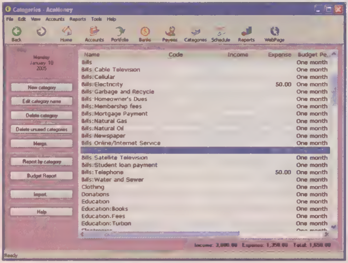
Unlike Microsoft's offering, Media Portal is available to anyone

> **"SADLY THOUGH, THIS SYSTEM IS ONLY AVAILABLE ON A SELECT FEW PC SYSTEMS AT THE MOMENT, MEANING YOU NEED TO BUY A NEW PC TO GET IT"**

that does just this. It features a menu system that lets you access TV channels, your DVD player, music files and more, without having to wade through Windows menus, and you can use a special remote control to manipulate the PC, so you don't even have to use the keyboard or mouse. Sadly though, this system is only available on a select few PC systems at the moment, meaning you need to buy a new PC to get it.

MediaPortal on the other hand, is free to anyone, and does the same job, and more besides. You can use it to watch TV and DVDs, listen to music and radio stations, organise and view your photos and you can even use it to check the weather. The program is quite buggy at the moment as it's still in a beta stage, but it's a very impressive program nonetheless.

Windows XP Media Center Edition
Price **Only available with Media Center PCs**
Pros **Excellent design, seamless integration with PC**
Cons **Not available as a standalone product yet**
Contact **www.microsoft.com**


Categories - AceMoney
File Edit View Accounts Reports Tools Help
Back
Home
Accounts
Portfolio
Banks
Payees
Categories
Schedule
Reports
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January 10
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New category
Edit category name
Delete category
Delete unused categories
Merge
Report by category
Budget Report
Import
Help
Ready

Name	Code	Income	Expense	Budget Pe..
Bills				One month
Bills Cable Television				One month
Bills:Cellular				One month
Bills:Electricity			50.00	One month
Bills:Garbage and Recycle				One month
Bills:Homeowner's Dues				One month
Bills:Membership fees				One month
Bills:Mortgage Payment				One month
Bills:Natural Gas				One month
Bills:Natural Oil				One month
Bills Newspaper				One month
Bills Online/Internet Service				One month
Bills Satellite Television				One month
Bills:Student loan payment				One month
Bills:Telephone			50.00	One month
Bills:Water and Sewer				One month
Clothing				One month
Donations				One month
Education				One month
Education:Books				One month
Education.Fees				One month
Education:Tuition				One month

Income: 3,000.00 Expense: 1,350.00 Total: 1,650.00

Keeping it simple, AceMoney Lite is perfect for home users

Sound Forge vs Wavepad

Audio editing is a notoriously complex job, so having the right tools to aid you is very important. Once of the best titles around is Sound Forge (**http://mediasoftware.sonypictures.com**), a powerful audio editor that can be used to manipulate and edit audio files. Using the familiar timeline-based view, you can cut into tracks, add effects, normalise samples and more. You can also convert and encode files as well as recording audio through the program and creating CDs.

While by no means as powerful as Sound Forge, Wavepad (**www.nch.com.au**) is a free audio tool that enables audio editing and recording, but uses a much more simplified interface, making it far more accessible to new users and those who only want to perform simple editing tasks. You can also burn audio tracks to CDs and can add a range of effects to your tracks.

Sound Forge has long been a popular audio editor, both at home and professionally

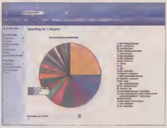
If you need to do simple audio editing, Wavepad is more than adequate

MediaPortal
Price **Free**
Pros **Packed with features, well designed menus**
Cons **Very buggy, some features are complicated to set up**
Contact **http://mediaportal.sourceforge.net**

Microsoft Money vs. AceMoney Lite

Amongst their masses of other uses, PC are excellent tools to have for keeping your household finances in order, and tracking your bill payments, mortgage, bank accounts and savings are made much easier.

One of the most popular tools in this respect is Microsoft Money, a very accomplished finance tool. As you'd expect with any Microsoft program, Money is a feature-laden package that comes with tools to handle any budget, from family households to large scale businesses. Another option in the commercial market is Quicken XG, a program that may even be more complex and powerful than Money, and possesses tools and options that cover just about anything you could ever think of when it comes to dealing with your finances.



Never loose track of your finances again with Money

However, as is so often the case, this large scale management is simply not needed for most of us, and when you just want to make sure your bank account stays in the black and the bills are paid, a simple program is all you need. Enter AceMoney Lite, a finance program that will let you keep tabs on your cash without the often confusing features of its commercial cousins.

Microsoft Money
Price **£20**
Pros **Masses of tools, regular updates, online options, user-friendly**
Cons **Little new content from previous versions, overkill for some**
Contact **www.microsoft.com/money**

AceMoney Lite
Price **Free**
Pros **Simple, great for household budgets**
Cons **No multiple accounts, not possible to download statements**
Contact **www.mechcad.net**

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Give your system a new lease of life with our essential optimisation tools, Windows configuration tips and behind-the-scenes hacks.

ARE YOU BREAKING THE LAW?

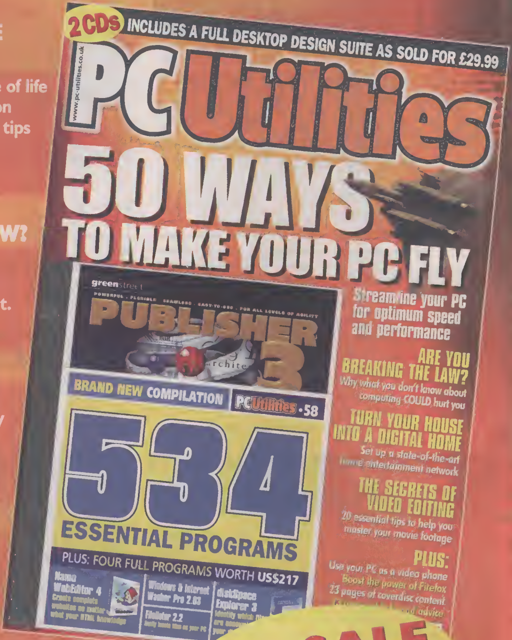
Ensure your computer use is 100% legal with our guide to what's allowed and what's not.

DIGITAL HOME

Find out how you can turn your humble home into a fully digitised, integrated environment – today!

Coverdisc

This month's double CD collection brings you a superb collection of freeware and shareware tools plus a complete DTP suite, previously sold for £30!



2 CDs INCLUDES A FULL DESKTOP DESIGN SUITE AS SOLD FOR £29.99

www.pc-utilities.co.uk

PC Utilities

50 WAYS TO MAKE YOUR PC FLY

Streamline your PC for optimum speed and performance

ARE YOU BREAKING THE LAW?
Why what you don't know about computing COULD hurt you

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Set up a state-of-the-art home entertainment network

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20 essential tips to help you master your movie footage

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No Install Linux

Ever wanted to give Linux a try? Now's your chance, because this month's second CD contains the very latest version of Knoppix, complete with cutting-edge software

COMPLETE FREE LINUX OPERATING SYSTEM
No installation or configuration required
Packed with over 900 full free programs
RUNS FROM THE CD!
NO INSTALL
Linux
128MB RAM recommended
Includes:
Stunning graphic interface
Complete office suite
Web browser
MP3 and video players
Image-editing package
System repair software
Freeware games
Powered by KNOPPIX Linux 3.7

Ever wanted to try out Linux but never got around to it? Or did you once try to install Linux but were put off by an overly complex installation routine?

This month's second coverdisc is the answer to your prayers, because it makes using Linux easy. It features Knoppix 3.7, the latest release of the no-install Linux distro. It runs straight from CD, and doesn't touch your hard disk. That's right - an entire operating system on one CD!

"IT INCLUDES NEARLY EVERY PROGRAM YOU COULD EVER NEED"

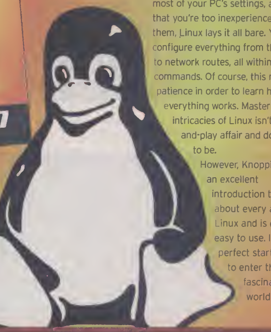
Although Knoppix weighs in at just under 700MB, it includes nearly every program you could ever need in addition to the core operating system. You'll find image editors, an entire office suite, Web browsers, email clients, and tons of system administration utilities such as disk partitioning tools. In most cases, cutting-edge versions of the software have been used. In this way, Knoppix is an excellent showcase for Linux.

For newcomers who might never have heard of Linux, allow us to explain. Linux is an operating system created by a man named Linus Torvalds. Once he'd got an initial version up and running, lots of other people joined in, and nowadays the Linux operating system is developed by thousands of people around the world. As such, it's not owned by any one person, and is designed to be shared.

Linux is based on Unix, an industrial-strength operating system. Because of this, it's different to Windows. It looks similar on the surface and most programs work in the same way, but the underlying technology is very different. This means that, unlike Windows, Linux is rock-solid and almost never crashes. It's also much less susceptible to viruses and security breaches. You can count on the fingers of one hand the number of Linux viruses. None of them are 'in the wild' because they died out shortly after their release.

Linux is popular within the performance computing arena because it gives you total control over your system. Whereas Windows hides most of your PC's settings, assuming that you're too inexperienced to touch them, Linux lays it all bare. You can configure everything from the PCI bus to network routes, all within a few commands. Of course, this requires patience in order to learn how everything works. Mastering the intricacies of Linux isn't a click-and-play affair and doesn't try to be.

However, Knoppix gives an excellent introduction to just about every aspect of Linux and is genuinely easy to use. It's a perfect starting point to enter the fascinating world of Linux.

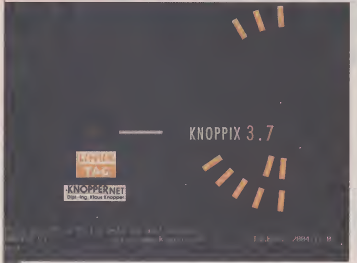


Using the coverdisc

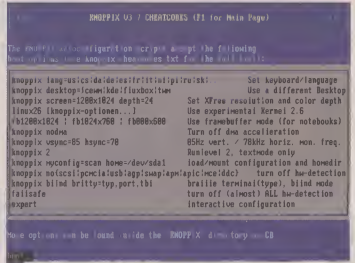
The version of Linux on our disc this month doesn't need installing or configuring. Instead it runs straight from the disc.

Simply insert the disc, alter your BIOS to boot from CD-ROM (if need be), restart, and wait for the KDE desktop to appear.

Getting started with Knoppix

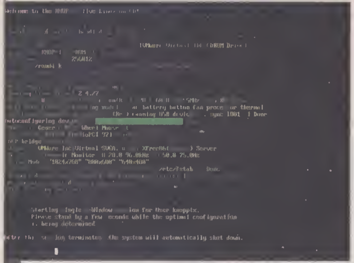

KNOPPIX 3.7
KNOPPER.NET
Dipl.-Ing. Klaus Knopper

1 Whilst your PC is booted up, open the CD/DVD tray and insert the No Install Linux CD then reboot. You might have to set your BIOS to boot from CD-ROM. However, if everything is set correctly you should see the Knoppix preloader screen.

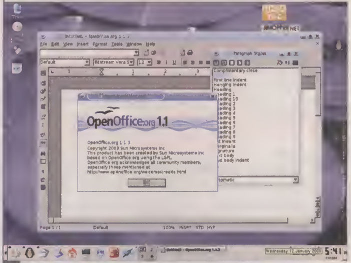


```
                 KNOPPIX V3 / CHEATCODES (F1 for Main Page)

The KNOPPIX autoconfiguration scripts accept the following
boot options (see knoppix-cheatcodes.txt for the full list):

knoppix lang=us|cs|da|de|es|fr|it|nl|pl|ru|sk|..      Set keyboard/language
knoppix desktop=icewm|kde|fluxbox|twm                 Use a different Desktop
knoppix screen=1280x1024 depth=24         Set XFree resolution and color depth
linux26 [knoppix-optionen...]             Use experimental Kernel 2.6
fb1280x1024 | fb1024x768 | fb800x600      Use framebuffer mode (for notebooks)
knoppix nodma                             Turn off dma acceleration
knoppix vsync=85 hsync=70                 85Hz vert. / 70kHz horiz. mon. freq.
knoppix 2                                 Runlevel 2, textmode only
knoppix myconfig=scan home=/dev/sda1      load/mount configuration and homedir
knoppix no{scsi|pcmcia|usb|agp|swap|apm|apic|mce|ddc}    turn off hw-detection
knoppix blind brltty=typ,port,tbl         braille terminal(type), blind mode
failsafe                                  turn off (almost) ALL hw-detection
expert                                    interactive configuration

More options can be found inside the KNOPPIX directory of the CD
```

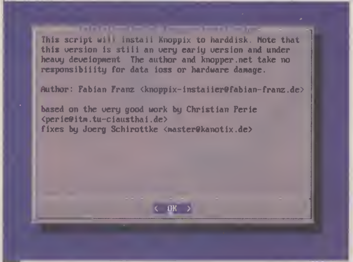
2 You can normally hit Enter, but pressing F3 will show a list of boot options. Type these at the BOOT: prompt. Each will change the default configuration slightly. Of particular interest is "linux26" – this will boot Knoppix with the latest (and faster) kernel.



3 Once you've made your choice, Knoppix will boot. Don't worry about all the stuff that appears on screen – this is what Linux does when booting. Neither should you fret if you see apparent error messages saying some hardware isn't found. This isn't a problem.

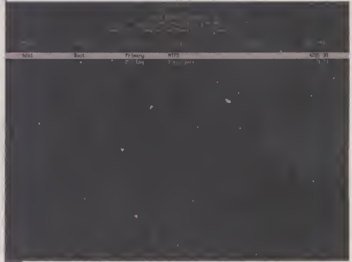

Untitled1 - OpenOffice.org 1.1.3
File Edit View Insert Format Tools Window Help
Default
Bitstream Vera S
12
Paragraph Styles
Complimentary close
First line indent
Hanging indent
Heading
OpenOffice.org 1.1
OpenOffice.org 1.1.3
Copyright 2003 Sun Microsystems Inc.
This product has been created by Sun Microsystems Inc. based on OpenOffice.org using the LGPL.
OpenOffice.org acknowledges all community members, especially those mentioned at
http://www.openoffice.org/welcome/credits.html
Page 1 / 1
Default
100%
INSRT
STD
HYP
Wednesday 12 January 2005
5:41
KNOPPER.NET

4 Eventually the KDE desktop will appear. Using this environment is easy, as it's not so different from the Windows XP desktop. At the bottom left is a Start-like menu (the large K icon), which lets you access the programs. Alternatively you can use the shortcut icons at the bottom of the panel.



```
This script will install Knoppix to harddisk. Note that
this version is still an very early version and under
heavy development  The author and knopper.net take no
responsibility for data loss or hardware damage.

Author: Fabian Franz <knoppix-installer@fabian-franz.de>

based on the very good work by Christian Perle
<perle@itm.tu-clausthal.de>
fixes by Joerg Schirottke <master@kanotix.de>

                        < OK >
```

5 If you like Knoppix, you can install it permanently to your hard disk. Hold down Ctrl+Alt and hit F3. At the command prompt, type *knoppix-installer*. You'll then be prompted to follow a wizard. There's a handy guide on what to do at www.bytebot.net/geekdocs/debian-knoppix.html.


hda1
Boot
Primary
NTFS

6 Knoppix isn't clever enough to be able to shrink your Windows partition, so you'll need to either preshrink it using a program like Paragon Partition Manager (on the PCT19 coverdisc), or install Knoppix on a second hard disk (which Knoppix will refer to as /dev/hdb).

The benefits of Linux

If you're a dedicated Windows user then you might be wondering what Linux offers above and beyond your favourite OS. Well, here for the first time is a completely honest appraisal of Linux. We pull no punches - so beware!

The biggest factor in favour of Linux is its security. It isn't hit by viruses or worms. There are a handful of these around but they tend to die out early in their lives. This isn't because Linux comes with virus scanners (it doesn't). It's because Linux is fundamentally more secure.

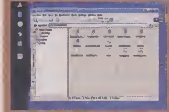
The second biggest thing appreciated by most Linux users is that it's not a Microsoft product. There's no Microsoft bits and pieces in there at all. Nowhere. Not even in the hidden system files. The thought of a Microsoft-free PC is one that proves extremely attractive to many users.

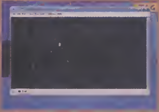
Linux might be starting to sound terrific but the downsides are hefty. The first is compatibility. Linux can run some Windows software, including games, but it's not an easy thing to set up and get going. There's bags of Linux software to play with, but you can forget about sharing software or files with Windows users.

This leads us straight to the next downside, which is that Linux takes a hell of a lot of work to get to grips with. Yes, you can use it almost immediately to point and click, and browse the Web, but figuring out how it works takes hours of study. You'll have to browse the Web, beg for answers on various forums and read books until the pages fall out. Then again, Windows took the same kind of work when you first got to grips with it. It's just that you've forgotten.

With Knoppix Linux, you don't need to deal with the setup and configuration process and can begin using the operating system almost immediately. This means you can start using the system, testing out the software and assessing how Linux meets your needs without compromising your Windows system in any way. What's more, if you're having serious problems with Windows and can't boot to the desktop, Knoppix provides an interim OS you can use until you get the problem sorted.

Linux glossary of terms


To access your Windows partition, double-click the hard-disk icon on the left of the desktop


Believe it or not, this separates the men from the boys - the shell prompt

For a bit of ASCII-based entertainment, check out the AA demo (look in the Start menu under Fun)

[illegible] Linux sees most hardware as files. You needn't worry too much about this but the end result is that it refers to your main hard disk as if it's a file /dev/hda. Your second hard disk is seen as /dev/hdb, and so on. In addition, each partition on each disk is given a number, starting from 1. So if you only have one partition on a single hard disk, Linux will refer to it as /dev/hda1. This is important because the icon on the desktop referring to /dev/hda1 will let you access your main hard disk.

Distro Short for 'distribution'; describes a prepackaged form of Linux which is easy to use and contains most if not all the extra software you need. Knoppix is a distro, as is Red Hat, SUSE Linux, Linspire, and so on. Not all of them boot from the CD like Knoppix – some are designed to be installed on a hard disk.

KDE Set of programs that provides the Knoppix GUI and associated administration software.

Mount To make another filesystem available under Linux, such as your Windows partition or a CD-ROM.

Root Either the root user who's all powerful (akin to the superuser or administrator under Windows) or the very bottom of the filesystem. There's no root password under Knoppix – if you get asked for one, leave the field blank and hit Enter.

Shell Command-line prompt; a bit like a DOS box. It lets you work within Linux without having to muck about with a mouse. It might sound daft, but lots of Linux die-hards prefer to work this way. It separates the men from the boys, the wheat from the chaff, the knitters from the cross-stitchers.

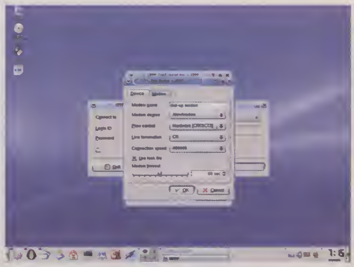
"THERE'S BAGS OF LINUX SOFTWARE TO PLAY WITH"

Getting online with Knoppix

Depending on how your PC connects to the Internet, you may be able to get online with Knoppix immediately. If your PC is behind a router, to which your PC connects via an Ethernet connection, then Knoppix should work straightaway. It will grab an IP address and you'll be online as soon as the desktop appears.

If you dial-up to the Internet via a modem, you'll need to use the KPPP program - it's on the K menu under the Internet sub-menu. Click the Configure button to enter your ISP's phone number and other details.

If you use a USB ADSL modem then you're probably out of luck. Linux isn't too hot in terms of support for such modems at the moment (although the situation is improving all the time). That said, Knoppix includes all the driver software currently out there so you should at least give it a try - click the Start menu, then the Internet sub-menu, and then ADSL/PPPOE Connection. Follow the on-screen prompts.



If you connect to the Net via a dial-up modem you'll need to use the KPP module from the K/ Internet menu

Cool programs on the Knoppix disc

The GIMP

The GIMP

Knoppix offers a generous selection of graphics-related programs, including version 2.0 of The GIMP. The key to using The GIMP is a right-click within the image – this lets you access nearly all the useful functions, such as image correction tools and filters. Get used to right-clicking and the program will be worth its weight in gold.

Location **K/ Graphics/ The Gimp**

GAIM

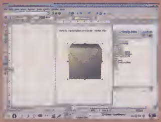
Instant messaging program which understands all the protocols: ICQ, MSN, Yahoo, and more. It's desperately easy to use and completely configurable. And it lets you talk to your mates. By typing stuff. And reading stuff they've typed. There's not much more we can say about this one, so let's move on.

Location **K/ Internet/ GAIM**

OpenOffice.org

Powerful and complete office suite which gives Microsoft Office a run for its money. Features a word processor (Writer), spreadsheet program (Calc), presentations package (Impress), and lots more. Boasts Microsoft Office file compatibility too.

Location **K/ OpenOffice.org 1.1.1**


OpenOffice.org

Mozilla

Knoppix offers a handful of Web browsers, including Konqueror, but we reckon Mozilla is the best (even if it does take longer to start up). Most sites will appear perfectly and, needless to say, the browser is compatible with underlying magic like Javascript. Mozilla is a suite of programs including an email/Usenet client and a website designer. Just look on the Internet menu.

Location **K/ Internet/ Mozilla Browser**

K3b

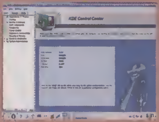
The blokes behind Nero Burning ROM must be fuming because K3b copies its look and feel as well as a healthy percentage of its functionality. You can compile and burn audio/data CDs/DVDs, as well as copy discs and burn ISO files. And it's all easy to use.

Location **K/ Multimedia/ K3b**

KDE Control Center

KDE's own tool through which you can configure how it works and, more importantly, how it looks. Click on the Appearance menu to select an alternative to the ugly window stylings chosen by the Knoppix crew. Light blue with [illegible]-effect edging... what *were* they thinking?

Location **K/ Control Center**



KDE Control Center

Konsole

Shell program which lets you get at the heart of Linux. OK, so it might be a little too much for you right now but remember where it is. As you start to learn more it'll become your best friend.

Location **K/ System/ Konsole**

Wine

Knoppix is clever enough to spot your Windows disk partition and make it available on the desktop (see the hard disk icons towards the bottom left). If you browse to your Program Files folder and click an .exe file, Knoppix will try to run it, even though it's a Windows program. This is done via Wine, a Windows emulator which comes preconfigured under Knoppix. OK so it doesn't work all the time but it's worth playing around with.

Location **K/ Wine**

Frozen-Bubble

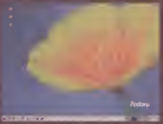
We don't know why the Knoppix designers have put this under the 'Tetris-like' menu because it's a direct clone of Puzzle Bobble, the arcade game where you fire coloured balls upwards and when you get a bunch of the same colour balls together they vanish.

Location **K/ Games/ Tetris-like/ Frozen-Bubble**

Got a taste for Linux?

This month's coverdisc features Knoppix Linux, a live CD version of the world's favourite free operating system. It doesn't need to install to your hard disk so is hassle-free.

If you like Linux, you can easily take your interest further by installing Linux on your hard disk. We discuss how this can be done with Knoppix in the six-step guide on page 16 but you're probably better-off with a dedicated distro.



Fedora Core is considered one of the best distros around – try it out if you want to take Linux further!

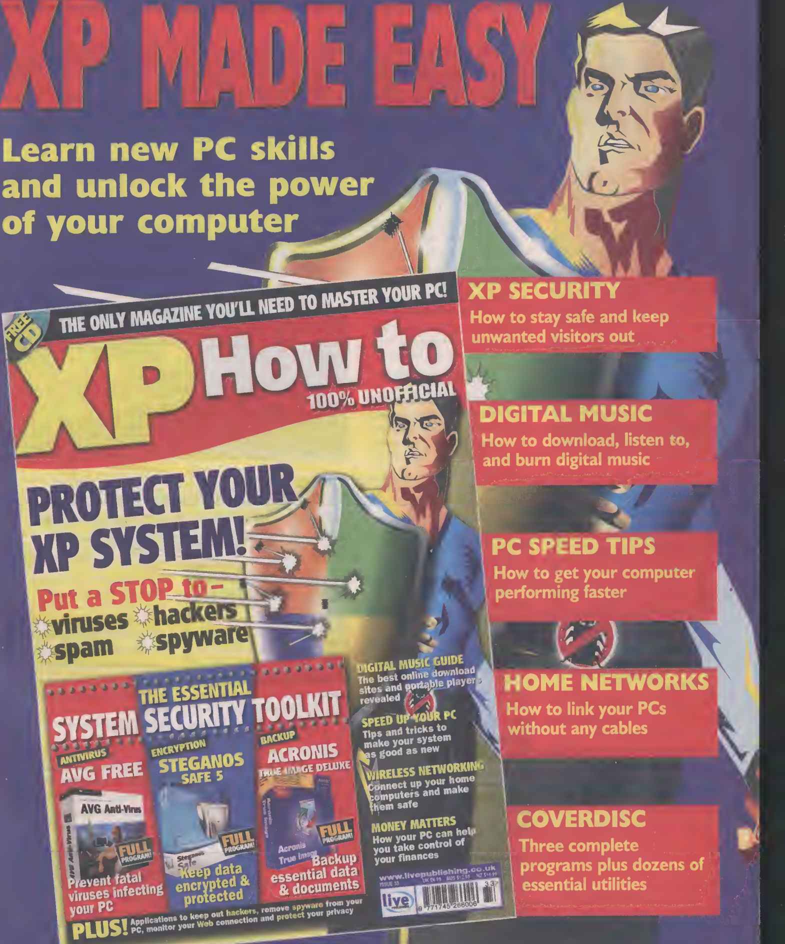
Gentoo is considered best for those into performance computing. It allows everything to be tweaked for speed, with users reporting astonishing performance figures. The downside is that it requires a hefty knowledge of Linux commands and technology. For more details, see www.gentoo.org.

Fedora Core is the next best option. This is relatively easy to use but also lets the user get at the inner working of Linux if they wish. Fedora is based on Red Hat Linux so is both popular and proven in the real world. To learn more, visit http://fedora.redhat.com.

Some people prefer SUSE Linux which, like Red Hat, is simultaneously easy to use but also packed with features for the power user. Its YaST2 configuration program allows the user to setup just about every aspect of his/her system – a rarity in the Linux world. For more details, visit www.suse.com.

XP MADE EASY

Learn new PC skills and unlock the power of your computer



THE ONLY MAGAZINE YOU'LL NEED TO MASTER YOUR PC!

FREE CD

XP How to

100% UNOFFICIAL

PROTECT YOUR XP SYSTEM!

Put a STOP to –
- viruses
- hackers
- spam
- spyware

THE ESSENTIAL SYSTEM SECURITY TOOLKIT

ANTIVIRUS
AVG FREE
FULL PROGRAM!
Prevent fatal viruses infecting your PC

ENCRYPTION
STEGANOS SAFE 5
FULL PROGRAM!
Keep data encrypted & protected

BACKUP
ACRONIS TRUE IMAGE DELUXE
FULL PROGRAM!
Backup essential data & documents

DIGITAL MUSIC GUIDE
The best online download sites and portable players revealed

SPEED UP YOUR PC
Tips and tricks to make your system as good as new

WIRELESS NETWORKING
Connect up your home computers and make them safe

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PLUS! Applications to keep out hackers, remove spyware from your PC, monitor your Web connection and protect your privacy

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How to stay safe and keep unwanted visitors out

DIGITAL MUSIC
How to download, listen to, and burn digital music

PC SPEED TIPS
How to get your computer performing faster

HOME NETWORKS
How to link your PCs without any cables

COVERDISC
Three complete programs plus dozens of essential utilities

ON SALE NOW

Windows

Windows may be the source of much frustration and hair pulling, but unless you're planning to opt for an alternative such as Linux, then Windows will be your operating system, day in, day out.

Windows has grown and evolved over time, and with Windows XP, we now have an operating system that not only functions as a vehicle for all of your software, but also packs in plenty of its own tools and applications too. Windows has a built-in text editor, Internet browser, archive functions, sound editor and even a movie-editing application. Of course, there's a whole host of other Microsoft software available, including the likes of Office, which bolster the OS still further.

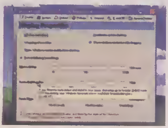
Of course, once you stray away from the software that comes built into Windows, you can easily run up a hefty bill. Luckily though, you don't have to break the bank to equip Windows with essential tools and software, and thanks to the vast array of freeware alternatives available, almost everything you could want can be found online for free. File managers, archive tools, clean-up utilities and even fully-featured office suites can be acquired without ever dipping into your wallet.

In this section you'll find a wide selection of free Windows applications to boost the power of the OS, from the powerful and flexible OpenOffice.org to more specialised tools that offer additions to the Windows interface, the ability to remotely control your PC, and tools that can tweak your system for optimised performance. So why not take a look and get your copy of Windows kitted out with some essential additions?

pcTuner

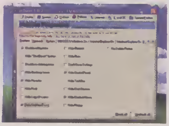
The Windows Control Panel is limited in what options it offers and only skims the surface of the changes it's possible to make to your system settings. Fortunately, much of what can't be done in the Control Panel can be altered in the Windows registry. However, unless you're an experienced Windows expert, you're likely to find the registry confusing and intimidating. A better alternative is to use a program like pcTuner, which puts an extensive list of settings within easy grasp.

With this program you can configure dozens of Windows settings that are usually difficult to access. It's possible to alter everything from display properties - including the icon size and the delay time before menus appear - to system properties such as the area of effect of double-click operations. pcTuner can also be used to hide Windows features, including the Control Panel, to ensure your computer isn't reconfigured by unauthorised users in your absence.



Help is available for most options when you hover over them with your mouse

Location **\windows\pctuner18b2.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://flyri.perm.ru**



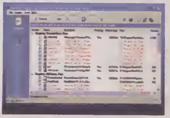
As well as tuning your system you can turn off a number of Windows features

StartUp Watchdog

It's a fact of PC life that your system will increase in bulk and decrease in speed with continued use. The speedy, streamlined operating system you first installed gets bogged down by endless applications and processes and begins to limp along tediously, suffering under the weight. To put a spring back into its step you should spend some time ridding it of many of the unnecessary bits and pieces that are dragging it down. An obvious place to begin is to take a look at what loads up with Windows. Clearly it's fine to allow your antivirus software to fire up memory resident processes if necessary, but it's a different matter if a load of obscure programs you no longer use are needlessly taking up a valuable chunk of RAM.

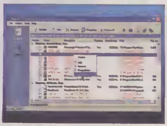
To find out what programs start up with Windows, just run StartUp Watchdog. This also provides information about what each one does. It's then up to you to choose which items should stay the same, and which to kill off. While using your PC, if any application (such as a virus or spyware tool) tries to modify your startup list, StartUp Watchdog immediately alerts you to what's happening so you can instantly stop it.

> **"TO FIND OUT WHAT PROGRAM START UP WITH WINDOWS, JUST RUN STARTUP WATCHDOG"**
>
> *StartUp Watchdog*

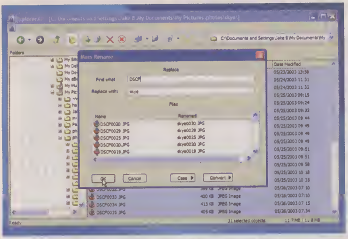


StartUp Watchdog produces a clear list of the applications that start up with Windows

Location **\windows\WatchdogSetup.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.adaptives.com**



You can find out more about any program by clicking on What Is It?



Mass Rename

Replace

Find what DSCF

Replace with: skye

Files

Name	Renamed
DSCF0030 JPG	skye0030 JPG
DSCF0029 JPG	skye0029 JPG
DSCF0025 JPG	skye0025 JPG
DSCF0020 JPG	skye0020 JPG
DSCF0019 JPG	skye0019 JPG

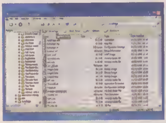
ExplorerXP makes it possible to rename batches of files at the same time

ExplorerXP

Although Windows Explorer is a perfectly acceptable file manager, there are better alternatives available. ExplorerXP is one such tool, and while it may look like its Windows equivalent on first glance, it has a lot more to offer. For starters, ExplorerXP displays the size of both files and folders, whereas Windows Explorer shows only the size of files. ExplorerXP also has a tabbed display similar to that employed by Mozilla Firefox, making it possible to browse between numerous open folders at the same time. Another extremely useful feature is its multi-rename tool, which enables users to rename a batch of files in one easy step. This may prove particularly beneficial to digital camera owners as photos are usually given incremental names such as DSCF0054, DSCF0055 and so on, which are tedious to rename manually.

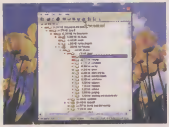
The program packs in even more additional features, too. Its merge tool enables a collection of files gathered together into a single file, which is useful when you have dozens of .zip files, for example, cluttering up your hard drive. If you want to access individual files again, simply use ExplorerXP to split them up.

Location **\windows\explorerxpsetup.exe**
System **XP/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.explorerxp.com**



Move between different open folders by clicking on the relevant tab

TreeSize



Rather than displaying percentages, you can view the actual size of each folder instead

Today's high-capacity hard drives offer a lot more storage space than the leading drives of only a few years ago. This won't stop you filling a hard drive up just as quickly though. Once you've installed your favourite applications and started dabbling in video editing and ripping .mp3s from your CD collection, you'll notice the amount of free space available has vastly depleted. This not only limits the amount of new files you can store, but can also adversely affect the performance of your machine because Windows requires a fair amount of free space on your hard drive in order to function at its best. Deleting applications and files without knowing how much space this will free up won't necessarily provide the extra space you're after. It's much better to target the areas of your hard drive where it matters most, and this is where TreeSize comes in.

This simple utility scans your hard drive to find out how much space is taken up by each folder and subfolder. It then lists your folders in order of size, displaying a percentage figure showing the proportion of hard drive space each takes up. Next to the folders are coloured blocks that follow the traffic light system and show you at a glance where space can be saved.

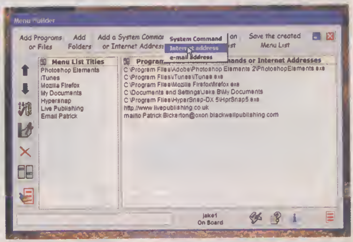
Location **\windows\TreeSizeSetup.exe**
System **98/Me/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.jam-software.com**

Unlimited Menus

The average PC user spends a significant proportion of their computing time navigating around the hard drive or Start menu trying to locate programs and files. Unlimited Menus enables you to cut out this unnecessary wasted time by creating shortcuts to pretty much anything you like. Instead of having to open endless folders and subfolders in My Computer, you can go directly to anywhere on your hard drive by choosing the corresponding menu item. As well as program and folder shortcuts, it's possible to add email shortcuts for the people you regularly send messages to. The program also enables you to include websites and system commands in your menu list.

Unlimited Menus consists of two different programs - Menu Builder for creating and editing menus and My Menu for bringing them to life. Both programs are easy to use, and it only takes a few minutes to create a menu that will save you hours of navigation time in the future. Once you've created your menu the My Menu program sits in your System Tray and can be recalled at any time to enable you to jump straight to the programs, shortcuts, emails and websites of your choice.

Location **\windows\Unlimited Menus.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://users.spark.net.gr/~stamatb/freesoft/**



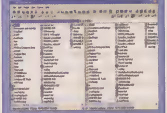
Menu List Titles	Program… …ands or Internet Addresses
Photoshop Elements	C \Program Files\Adobe\Photoshop Elements 2\PhotoshopElements exe
iTunes	C \Program Files\iTunes\iTunes exe
Mozilla Firefox	C \Program Files\Mozilla Firefox\firefox exe
My Documents	C \Documents and Settings\Jake B\My Documents
Hypersnap	C \Program Files\HyperSnap-DX 5\HprSnap5 exe
Live Publishing	http //www livepublishing co uk
Email Patrick	mailto Patrick Bickerton@oxon blackwellpublishing com

Use the Menu Builder program to construct as many menus as you like

freeCommander

freeCommander is an alternative method of managing your data within Windows. Replacing the often cumbersome Windows Explorer, freeCommander boasts a more intuitive dual panel file viewer making it easy to explore your drives to find the files you need.

Location **\windows\fc_setup_.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.freecommander.com**



Finding files is made much easier thanks to freeCommander's dual displays

OpenOffice.org 1.1.4

Open Source software (programs where the source code is made available for others to view and improve) is very popular in the online community, and it's often the best way to ensure a program is constantly improving. One of the most successful Open Source projects is OpenOffice.org – a very powerful and fully functional multi-platform office suite that comes packed with everything you'll need to produce letters, reports, spreadsheets and any other task you'd expect to perform within an office application. All of the usual elements of an office suite are included in the package, including a word processor, spreadsheet application, presentation tool and even a drawing program.

Writer is the suite's word processor, and like Microsoft's Word, it's a powerful application. All of the usual items and tools you'd expect to find here are included, including all of the standard formatting and font tools, spellchecking, auto correct and more. More impressive are the collaboration tools, which make it possible for more than one person to work on the same document over a network.

The suite's spreadsheet capabilities are provided by Calc. Again, like its Microsoft counterpart, Excel, Calc has all the essential tools required to produce fully functional and dynamic spreadsheets. This includes various functions (such as average and sum) and a whole host of templates with built-in functions.

Draw is the package's art module, and using it you can create anything from simple quick sketches to full-blown plans and complex diagrams. Draw boasts a range of tools, including Bezier curves raster effects, transparency options and the ability to create 2D and 3D images from text. It also supports a wide range of image files, such as .bmp, .jpg and .tif.

Finally we have Impress, which is OpenOffice.org's version of PowerPoint. As with the Microsoft tool, you can use Impress to create striking presentations. Images and clipart can be imported into your projects and you can also make use of 3D objects and special effects. The auto layout tool will ensure your creations are presented well and there's a range of possible viewing options for previewing that all-important presentation.

With this much power and flexibility on offer and all of it for free, there's really no reason not to give this stunning freeware package a go.

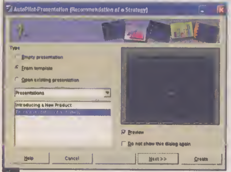
Location **\windows\OOo_1.1.4_Win32Intel_install.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.openoffice.org**

OpenOffice.org 2.0 (beta)

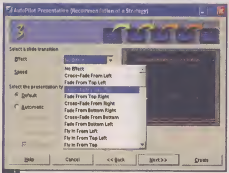
[illegible] version of OpenOffice [illegible] latest [illegible] OpenOffice.org 2.0. Th[illegible] version [illegible] a few [illegible] that will make [illegible] release. [illegible] It [illegible] features [illegible] programs. [illegible] number [illegible] and audio [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] **\windows\OOo_[illegible].9.m65_native_Win32Intel_install.zip**
[illegible] **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
[illegible] **Freeware**
[illegible] **www.openoffice.org**

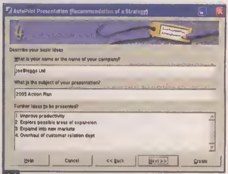
Create a presentation with OpenOffice.org 1.1.4 Impress


AutoPilot Presentation (Recommendation of a Strategy)
1.
Type
Empty presentation
From template
Open existing presentation
Presentations
Introducing a New Product
Preview
Do not show this dialog again
Help
Cancel
Next >>
Create

1 To begin we'll make use of Impress' template option. Open up Impress and select the From Template option. In the next couple of steps you'll need to select a template style and colour scheme, so do so and click the Next buttons.


AutoPilot Presentation (Recommendation of a Strategy)
3
Select a slide transition
Effect
Speed
Select the presentation ty
Default
Automatic
No Effect
Cross-Fade From Left
Fade From Top Left
Fade From Top Right
Cross-Fade From Right
Fade From Bottom Right
Cross-Fade From Bottom
Fade From Bottom Left
Fly In From Left
Fly In From Top Left
Fly In From Top
Help
Cancel
<< Back
Next >>
Create

2 Step 3 gives you several different choices of transition between the different slides of your presentation, such as sideways wipes and dissolves. Use the drop-down list to select the type of transition you like and then click the Next button.


AutoPilot Presentation (Recommendation of a Strategy)
4.
Help
Cancel
<< Back
Next >>
Create

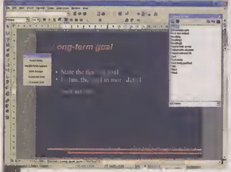
Describe your basic ideas

What is your name or the name of your company?
JoeBloggs Ltd

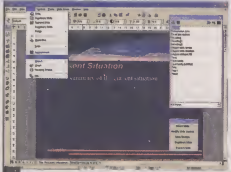
What is the subject of your presentation?
2005 Action Plan

Further ideas to be presented?
1 Improve productivity
2 Explore possible areas of expansion
3 Expand into new markets
4. Overhaul of customer relation dept

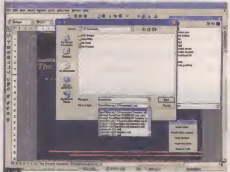
3 You'll now need to enter your company details and other information, such as your planned changes or strategies. Enter these in the fields available and then click Next to view the slide order. Tick the sections you want and click the Create button.


ong-term goal

4 Now your presentation shell is complete you can use the main editor to add your own content and personal touches to it. Using the tabs along the bottom of the main window, select the slide you want to edit. To add more text, select the Text option and click where you want to place it.


sent Situation

5 To brighten up your presentation or to add important graphs or diagrams you can import images and objects. To do this select Insert from the menu bar and then click Graphics. Use the dialog box to browse to the image you wish to include and select it. You can now drag and resize it as you like.

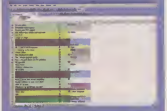


6 Once you're happy with the presentation you'll need to save the project out. For flexibility (one of OpenOffice.org's strengths), you can save the project out in a number of formats, including Microsoft PowerPoint. Select the file you want and click Save.

602PC Suite

[illegible]

\windows\pcs4.exe
98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Freeware
www.software602.com

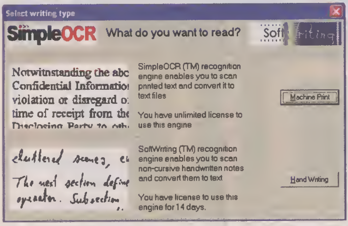


602PC Suite's Tab component is a fully Excel-compatible spreadsheet tool

SimpleOCR

Optical Character Recognition (OCR), the method of converting scanned documents into editable text, is an essential task for many PC users. However, unless you received a decent OCR tool with your scanner, you'll find such programs rather expensive to buy. SimpleOCR is a freeware optical character recognition tool that answers this deficiency and enables the scanning of text documents into a PC. A wide array of import options are available, and it supports both colour and greyscale images.

Location **\windows\instSocr.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.simpleocr.com**



Notwitnstanding the abc
Confidential Informatio
violation or disregard o
time of receipt from the
Disclosing Party to oth

SimpleOCR (TM) recognition engine enables you to scan printed text and convert it to text files

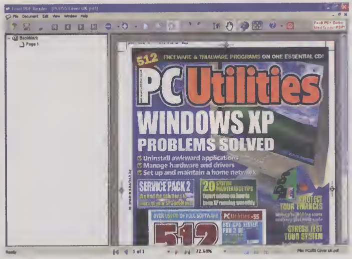
You have unlimited license to use this engine

cluttered scenes, e
The next section define
operator. Subsection

SoftWriting (TM) recognition engine enables you to scan non-cursive handwritten notes and convert them to text

You have license to use this engine for 14 days.

Simple OCR can convert both printed text and handwriting into editable text, though the later option is shareware



512 FREEWARE & TRIALWARE PROGRAMS ON ONE ESSENTIAL CD!
PC Utilities
WINDOWS XP
PROBLEMS SOLVED
Uninstall awkward applications
Manage hardware and drivers
Set up and maintain a home network
SERVICE PACK 2
20
PROTECT YOUR FINANCES
STRESS TEST YOUR SYSTEM
512

Foxit PDF Reader is a slimline alternative to Adobe Acrobat Reader

Foxit PDF Reader

At some point in your Internet usage you'll no doubt stumble across a .pdf file. Usually you'll need to use Adobe's Acrobat Reader to view these, but not if you have Foxit PDF Reader. This is a standalone .pdf viewer application that's very useful if you want to read .pdf format eBooks.

Location **\windows\pdfrd.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.foxitsoftware.com**

PrimoPDF

PrimoPDF is an excellent free program for those who need to convert their documents to .pdf format, but can't afford the usually expensive .pdf creation tools. Acting as a virtual printer, this lets you create .pdf files by 'printing' any document to the new device.

Location **\windows\PrimoSetup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.primopdf.com**

Inedita

Inedita is an advanced text editor that expands upon the functions of Notepad by offering a tabbed interface. This enables you to open multiple text files in a single window, making it much easier to flick between them. You can also split large documents vertically or horizontally so you can view different sections of the document at the same time.

Location **\windows\ineditainstall.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.versoworks.com**

TextMe

Most applications come with a readme.txt file, which provides a brief overview of the features of the software and the changes that have been made since the last version. If you browse through your different program folders you'll probably find a large collection of these text files, most of which will be full of useful information. Unfortunately, many people ignore these files, or are unaware of their existence in the first place. The situation isn't helped by the fact that it takes a bit of effort to track them down. To make things easier it's possible to group all your text files together using TextMe.

This is a straightforward program that consists of just two panes. On the left is a list of your text files, and you can view the contents of the selected file in the pane on the right. The easiest way to add more text files to the program is to drag and drop them onto the TextMe window. If you first search for all the .txt files on your computer (using My Computer or Windows Explorer) you can then drag the search results into the program and quickly create a one-stop-shop for all the text files on your machine.

Location **\windows\textme.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www15.brinkster.com/pmchapman**

EDXOR

[illegible]

[illegible]
98[illegible]
Freewar[illegible]
[illegible]

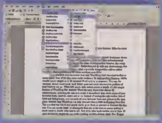
[illegible]

WordToys Personal Edition

Microsoft Word is the world's most popular word processor and its dominance shows no sign of abating, despite facing stiff competition from both free and commercial alternatives. While it naturally has its fair share of indispensable features, like every other software package it isn't perfect. Rather than put up with any shortcomings, it is possible to enhance Word's features with a specially designed free add-on called WordToys Personal Edition (www.wordtoys.com).

Once installed, you can access your new WordToys features via a new toolbar or menu option. Each of the icons on this toolbar relate to a different WordToys function. One of the first icons is for the AutoPilot function, which enables you to trigger up to 20 standard Word options in sequence [illegible] same [illegible] a [illegible]. While this macro style option comes in handy, it's the unique features in WordToys that enhance Word the most. It provides almost 30 enhancements, including the option to create a streamlined drop down menu of your favourite fonts, symbols, styles and so on. Instead of wading through endless lists of fonts and dialog boxes, you can have all your favourite fonts and options in the same place.

Another way WordToys can help you save time is with its Footage Font Size. This is a slide bar which you simply move up or down to increase or decrease the font size. You can see the effect of altering the font size in the text on-screen, making it much easier to decide what size to use. One of its other tools enables you to close all open documents except the one you're working on and a feature called Doc Hopper [illegible]


Access many new features in Microsoft Word via the Toys menu option

Location **\windows\wdtoys10.zip**
System **[illegible]XP/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.wordtoys.com**

Piece Copy

Piece Copy is an interesting tool that can copy a portion of a file, rather than the whole thing. This means that you can extract selected data from a file, remove file headers or retrieve binary data from a specific position - very useful for grabbing data from damaged files.

Location **\windows\PieceCopy.EXE**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.inner-smile.com**

SnapFolders

Locating folders on your local hard drive or network drives often means clicking through several levels of folders and subfolders. A much quicker option is to create a SnapFolder for your frequently accessed folders so they can be directly accessed from the Start menu. SnapFolders opens up special two-paned Windows folders with the target directory already selected.

Location **\windows\SnapFolders_2005_Setup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.proffs.nu/snap.htm**

CopyLock

If you've ever needed to update or replace a file only to be told that the system is using it and the file is locked, this tool is for you. Using CopyLock to replace such files is a simple matter of choosing the items to be processed. The program will then instruct you to restart and once that's done, your update will be complete.

Location **\windows\copylock.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://noeld.com**

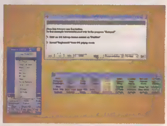
Folder Creator

Folder Creator is a useful tool for creating a large number of folders at the same time. The program creates new folders and names them either after filenames in a chosen directory or names defined in a text file. You can exclude the extension from the folder names so they don't end up with strange names.

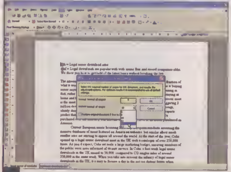
Location **\windows\FolderCreator4.0.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://home.tiscali.no/tonyhome/**

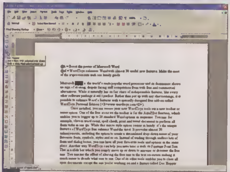
remotekeys

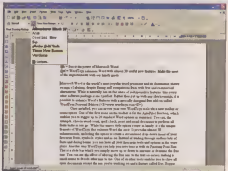
Most people regularly repeat tasks when working on their PC - completing Internet forms with the same information or inserting the

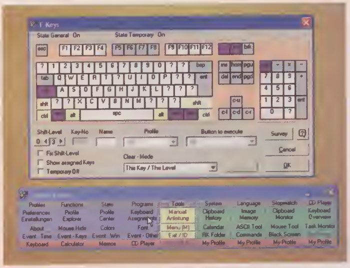

There are a number of easy-to-follow tutorials to help you get started

Add useful features to Word with WordToys Personal Edition


1 If you have to spread your text over a certain number of pages but don't want to write any more words, you can use the Size to Fit option to distribute the text over more pages. When you click the icon a dialog box is displayed - choose the desired number of pages and click OK.


2 The Doc Hopper is useful when you want to find different occurrences of a word. Highlight the word and hover your mouse over the Doc Hopper icon (the Kangaroo). Hold down the Ctrl key and click the Kangaroo to hop to the next mention of the word, or Shift and click to find the previous occurrence.


3 To create an alternative font list of the fonts you most regularly use, click on the red font icon next to the normal font list. Click Configure and drag and drop the fonts of your choice onto the list. When finished, only your favourite fonts will be available in the list and not the ones you never use.



Assigning remotekeys is just a matter of clicking on the on-screen keyboard

same text into documents and emails, for example. For each of these repetitive tasks, you can save time and effort by assigning remotekeys to do it for you rather than entering the information manually each time.

Remotekeys work with over 350 pre-written commands, which you can trigger in any sequence. These commands perform set tasks such as inserting the date, opening programs, ordering icons on screen and inserting Excel formulas. By stringing them together you can devise an automated way to perform repeated tasks. However, if there are no commands available to perform the actions you require, it's possible to record your own using remotekey's macro recorder.

A timer is provided to enable you to trigger remotekeys at pre-set times. This is particularly convenient as it means you don't even have to be using your machine to trigger the commands. You can, for example, schedule time-consuming tasks, such as virus scans, for when you aren't using your machine. The program has slots for over 2,500 automated tasks, and the program stays in the System Tray so you can immediately trigger any of the tasks at any time.

Location **\windows\RemoteKeys.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.freewarehits.de**

DustBuster XP

Keeping your system clean and tidy is an important aspect of system maintenance. DustBuster XP can help you achieve this by scouring your PC for any unwanted junk files and can safely remove them automatically. Using a special 'common sense' scanning system, the program can find and clean over 1,500 types of garbage data from your system, all with the press of a single button.

Location **\windows\db_281_standard.msi**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.wide.it**

RegSeeker

The Windows registry is a vital component of the operating system. Even if you don't venture into its depths yourself, it's still used and modified every time you use your PC and this means that things can easily go wrong. Registry keys may become corrupt, programs may leave behind junk files or in a worst-case scenario your whole system may become unstable. In these situations a registry cleaner is your best friend.

RegSeeker's main role is that of a cleaner, and using its powerful routines it can scan through your entries, making sure that everything is in working order. As well as the cleaning option, RegSeeker will also present you with detailed information regarding your startup entries, installed programs, history items and much more. You can search for any item within the registry and can export or delete any results.

As an added bonus, the program also comes with a special tweaking panel containing several functions that help you get the most of your system and your operating system. This latest version of the program features a range of bug fixes and a few refinements to the program's operations, making it more efficient at sprucing up your system.

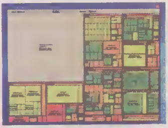
Location **\windows\RegSeeker.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.hoverdesk.net**

SpaceMonger

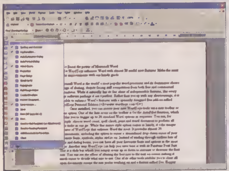
Even though computer users are now blessed with large hard drives and more storage space than ever before, keeping track of available space is still important, especially when dealing with large video or audio files.

SpaceMonger adopts a novel visual approach to managing the files on your system. Folders and files are displayed in proportion to the amount of file space they take up, making it easy to identify where all your hard disk space is being wasted.

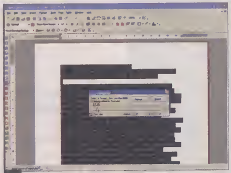
Location **\windows\spmn140.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.werkema.com**



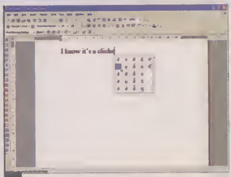
Quickly identify which items are taking up drive space with SpaceMonger's graphical report



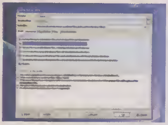
4 If you want to execute a series of commands in succession you can take advantage of WordToy's Auto Pilot feature. Click on the aeroplane and you'll see a list of 20 options. Most of these are commonly-used standard Word features. Select the ones you want to apply and click Go!



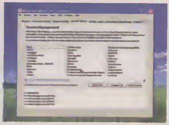
5 To change the font size of your document and visualise exactly how the change will affect the layout choose the Format Finetuner. Move the slider to increase or decrease the font to the desired size. It is also possible to use the tool to alter line and font spacing and the left and right indents.



6 You no longer have to go through a convoluted route to insert special characters in foreign words. Instead, all you have to do is press F10 immediately after you've typed a letter that has to be accented. You can then choose the appropriate accented version of the letter from the characters displayed.



SyncBack is easy to use and gives users almost total control



Backing up is a delicate process, so the program lets you disable various background services

SyncBack

If you use both a desktop PC and a laptop, and need to carry your work around with you, you'll know how important it is to keep a backup of your work in case you ever lose your laptop or it gets stolen. SyncBack is a specially designed backup program that focuses on synchronised backups between two locations. Using the program you can back up data from one location to another. For future operations, you can also ensure your backup archive is identical to the source. In this way you can back up the work on your laptop to your PC then keep it up to date with each subsequent operation.

You can fully customise the way new and older files are handled and you can set up rules to exclude files from a backup procedure. Backups can be compressed to save space, and you can set up schedules for automatic operations to make sure your data is always suitably protected.

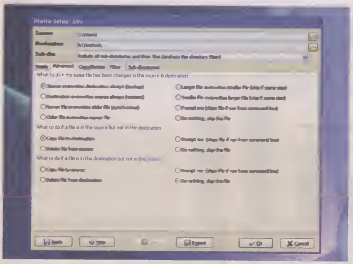
Location **\windows\SyncBack_Setup.zip**
System **9B/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.2brightsparks.com**

Simply Safe Backup

We shouldn't need to emphasise how important it is to back up your data, and many PC users now do so on a regular basis. Simply Safe Backup can help make the process smoother by offering complete backup functionality along with an easy-to-use interface and an integrated CD/DVD-burning engine. Backing up is a simple matter of selecting the data to be copied and starting the process. Once the process has run, backups can be sent to the hard disk, CD/DVD, or even to another location via FTP.

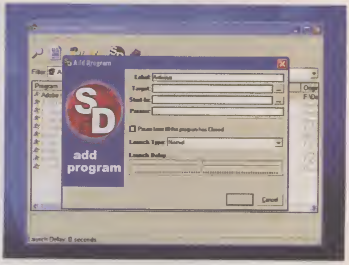
Backups can be accessed at a later date and individual files can be extracted from the archives. There's also a search option available for archives and you can apply encryption algorithms to secure your backed up data against prying eyes. The program's only real downside is the lack of any scheduling, but for a totally free backup option, you won't be disappointed.

Location **\windows\ssbkufei.zip**
System **9B/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.simplysafebackup.com**



Profile Setup: Airs
What to do if the same file has been changed in the source & destination
What to do if a file is in the source but not in the destination
What to do if a file is in the destination but not in the
Export
Cancel

SyncBack's Advanced options provide an even greater degree of control over how backups are created



Adding new programs is easy enough, and you can also set a launch delay

Startup Delayer

Programs automatically starting up with Windows are often the root cause of system slowdown, pop-up advertising or more severe PC problems, and the more programs that launch with Windows, the more problems may occur. One way to combat this effectively is to stop programs from starting up with Windows altogether. However, if you actually need to have a group of programs active, this isn't a great solution.

Startup Delayer is an alternative option, and rather than simply stopping programs from running altogether, you can delay programs during startup so that they don't all attempt to boot up at once. This means that less CPU resources are taken up, and you may even experience some increased system speed. Programs can be staggered to start up in a sequence, so you can have important security programs boot up first, followed by others, or you can simply delay other programs when you don't need them. The delay process is very easy to use, and there's even a visual display of the current set up along with a slide bar that controls program loading times.

Location **\windows\startdelay_v2.1b10.exe**
System **9B/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.r2.com.au**

DeskPins

DeskPins is a simple program that works in the same way as the Always on top option available in some programs, enabling you to pin any application to the top of the pile. All you have to do is grab a virtual pin and stick it on the open Window. It will then remain on top regardless of whether you're actively using the program or not. In this way you can ensure you can always see what's playing in your favourite media player, for example.

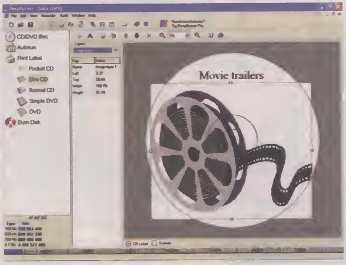
Location **\windows\DeskPins130.zip**
System **9B/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://users.forthnet.gr/pat/efotinis/**

Brutus 2005

When you're in a rush and want to shut down your computer as quickly as possible you're likely to want the log off and shut down options within easy reach on your desktop, rather than inside the Start menu. Brutus adds Shutdown and Restart icons to the desktop, making them that bit more accessible.

Location **\windows\Brutus_2005_Setup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.proffs.nu/brutus.htm**

> **"THE MORE PROGRAMS THAT LAUNCH WITH WINDOWS, THE MORE PROBLEMS MAY OCCUR"**
>
> *Startup Delayer*



To round off your DeepBurner projects, you can design and print your own CD labels and inlays

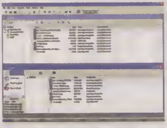
DeepBurner

Nero is considered by many to be the pinnacle of CD/DVD-burning software, and quite rightly so, as it's an excellent program. However, it is quite pricey, and you may not want to splash out on a copy. As Windows' own CD-burning engine is very limited, you'll need a better solution, which is where DeepBurner comes in.

DeepBurner is a great freeware burning package that handles many of the same tasks that Nero can perform. Using the program you can easily burn CDs and DVDs in various forms, such as data CDs, video CDs, audio discs and so on. You can create closed and open discs, make full use of rewritable volumes and can use the program's layout tools to create CD cases and labels. To add to this you can create photo CD albums, make ISO CDs and can use the program as an efficient method of creating backups.

The interface is very similar to the likes of Nero, and it uses the same drag-and-drop functionality, so if you've had any experience with other CD burning packages you'll be able to use this right away. DeepBurner supports a vast number of internal and external (USB and FireWire) devices and even features error reducing and space saving technologies such as Burnproof and Overburning. This all makes DeepBurner a highly recommended application for anyone who needs to burn their own CDs and DVDs.

Location **\windows\DeepBurner1.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.deepburner.com**

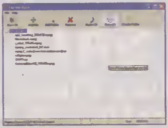


Like Nero, the dual-paned drag-and-drop interface is an easy way of building up your discs

Express Burn

Express Burn is a fast CD and DVD burning application that offers full support for CD/DVD data and audio projects. Audio CDs are recorded using direct digital recording for excellent audio quality and the program even has Mac extension recognition, so you can burn Mac-compliant discs.

Location **\windows\burnsetup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.nch.com.au**



Express Burn is a very simple and fast CD burning application

> **"USE THE PROGRAM'S LAYOUT TOOLS TO CREATE CD CASES AND LABELS"**
>
> *DeepBurner*

FreeExtractor

Self-extracting .zip files can prove useful when it comes to distributing your own programs and applications. People can access a self-extracting .zip file even if they don't have WinZip or a similar archive manager installed. Because of this, you can keep the file size down, making online distribution much easier, but can still make it available for anyone, with no worries that some users won't be able to access your wares. To create and distribute WinZip self-extractors however, you'll first need to purchase WinZip, which you may or may not be able to afford.

FreeExtractor is a freeware tool that can create a self-extracting archive from any existing .zip file - including compressed folders created under Windows Me/XP. All you need to do is follow the handy wizard to select the source and destination files and then create the new self-extracting archive. You can then go on to enter any important user info, including intro text and a homepage, and you can also set a default extraction path should you need to. Once this is done, your file is ready for distribution.

Location **\windows\FESetup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.disoriented.com**

ZipGenius Suite Edition

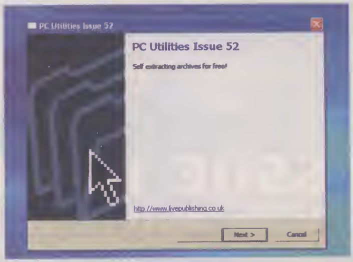
Compressing files is an essential task these days, not only for storage, but also for placing files online for download. ZipGenius performs this task, and functions just like the commercial alternative WinZip. This program also possesses much better security features though, and also has some very useful backup tools.

Location **\windows\zg551sui.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.zipgenius.it**

Mousesoft Directory Size

When you use Windows Explorer to browse your drives you'll be able to find out the size of individual files, but in order to find out the size of a folder, you have to select all the items and view the properties. Mousesoft Directory Size solves this oversight and can instantly display the size of all the folders on your system. A selected folder will also display the individual files in size order, colour coded by type.

Location **\windows\MDS1123.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.mousesoft.co.uk**

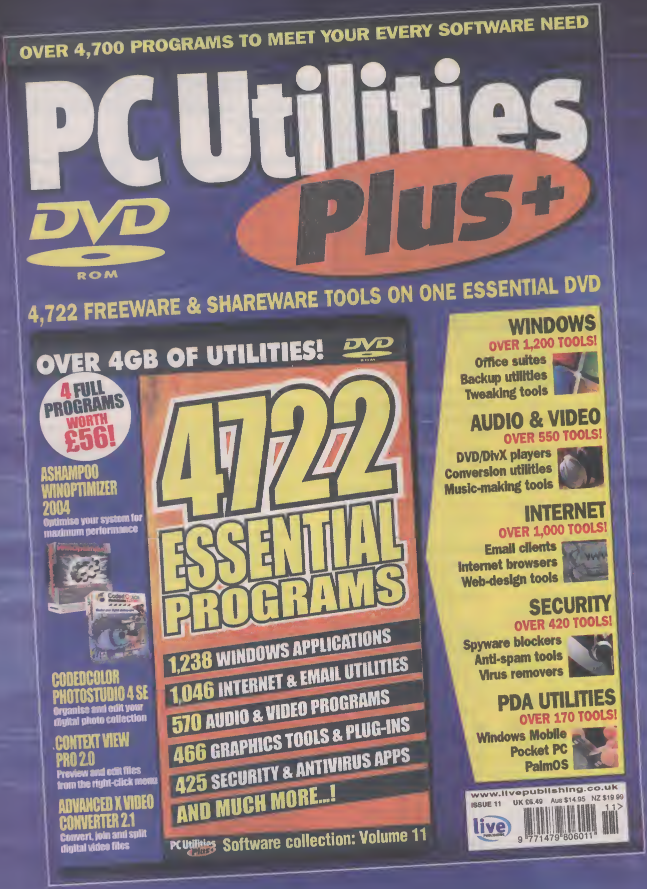


PC Utilities Issue 52

Self extracting archives for free!

http://www.livepublishing.co.uk

The final archive has a professional look to it, and is great for distributing your own programs



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Internet

One of the foremost reasons people give for buying a computer is to gain access to the Internet. It's not difficult to see why: the Web has quickly developed into a significant source of information on virtually any topic you care to think of. The Internet also provides people around the world with many ways to communicate instantly with each other, such as through email.

Because it costs nothing to access most Internet information (save for your Internet connection fees), most users expect the software that enables them to access this information to be free too. That's one reason why there's such a massive selection of Internet-related freeware to choose from, including alternative Web browsers, FTP clients, email tools, anti-spam utilities and much more.

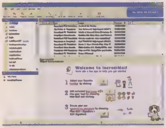
Given that Windows comes equipped with a decent Internet browser and email client, many people don't see the need to look for alternative software. But as we hope to show in this section, there are some great freeware Internet programs available that go way beyond Internet Explorer and Outlook Express in terms of what they offer. Best of all, the programs are free, so it won't cost you anything to give them a try.

"THERE ARE SOME GREAT FREEWARE INTERNET PROGRAMS AVAILABLE THAT GO WAY BEYOND INTERNET EXPLORER AND OUTLOOK EXPRESS"

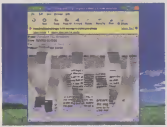
IncrediMail

IncrediMail is a fully functional and impressive email client that not only offers all the usual functions you require from an email program, but also packs in a range of extra features over and above those of standard applications.

IncrediMail's main selling point is its graphical flair and range of personalisation tools that make your emails unique. Using the program you can create your own email stationery, such as backgrounds, animations (including animated emoticons), and sounds - you can even scan in your signature. Impressive 3D effects can be activated when sending or receiving messages (such as letters flying onto your screen or deleted messages being shredded) and the program also includes a range of email-notification alerts to keep you up to date with what's going on in your mail boxes (including characters that talk to you). You can even add your own voice to your mails by recording vocal notes or announcements using the sound recorder.



The main program is similar to that of a standard email client, but it's much better looking and has a handy status display



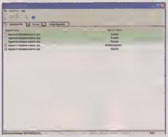
The 3D effects echo the animations you see in films, with mail envelopes floating in and messages being shredded

To keep things fresh, the program can be updated via the Web gallery, which regularly features new images and artwork for use in your emails.

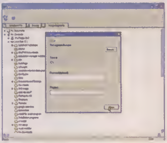
Location **\Internet\IncrediMailSetup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.incredimail.com**

Peer2Mail

Web-based email accounts often come with a large amount of free storage space. This is supposed to be used for emails, but you can just as easily use it to store files. All you need to do is send a file as an email attachment and leave it stored in your inbox until you want to access it again. The only problem is that email services put strict limits on the size of attachments. Files that are larger than around 5 or 10MB aren't usually accepted. Unfortunately, media files such as video clips and high-quality .mp3s far exceed this limit, so you have to find an alternative way to get them into your email account.



Large files are split into smaller segments before being sent off



Once you've downloaded the different segments, Peer2Mail merges them back together again

Peer2Mail provides a solution to this problem. It works by splitting large files into smaller segments before they are emailed to your account. It compresses and encrypts each segment and enables you to add password protection to ensure your files are kept hidden from prying eyes. As the program's name implies, you can even use it to share files from your email account with friends and family, making this an original and useful tool.

Location **\Internet\P2MSetup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.peer2mail.com**

"VEMAIL IS A VERY SIMPLE WAY TO SEND A VOICE MESSAGE"

Vemail

Vemail is a very simple way to send a voice message. When you've entered your recipient's email address, hold down the F6 key and record your message. You can then send your message if you're happy with it, continue recording by pressing F6 again, or delete it and start again.

Location **\email\vesetup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.nch.com.au/vemail/**

Burrito

Burrito is an unusual tool that enables you to use an FTP program to view and manage your emails. This can be useful if you want to back up your mailbox or remove large messages from your inbox to free up valuable space. You could even use za combination of Burrito and your FTP program instead of a conventional email program.

Location **\email\burrito10b.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.magnetiq.com**

Mail Box Dispatcher

Anti-spam programs are fairly effective, but you often need to view the spam before telling the program you don't want it. Mail Box Dispatcher works on the server side, so you don't have to view messages to filter them. By looking at who sent the email you can decide whether to receive it.

Location **\internet\mbdisp.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.anti-spam-tools.com**

Mozilla Thunderbird

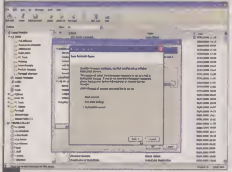
Mozilla's standalone email client has gone through a number of name changes over the years, but now that it's hit version 1.0 it seems Thunderbird is here to stay. Thunderbird is to Outlook Express what Firefox is to Internet Explorer - that is, not merely an alternative program but a would-be successor that radically improves on Microsoft's offering.

Like Outlook Express, Thunderbird is an email client that provides all the tools you need to download, read, organise and compose email messages. If you currently use Outlook Express, you'll find upgrading to Thunderbird a seamless process, as the program's Import Wizard automatically detects your current mail account settings, address book and email folders. This means you can start sending and receiving emails as soon as the setup process is finished.

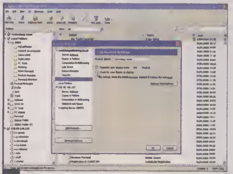
One of the many advantages Thunderbird has over other email clients is that it has been built with the prevention of viruses and junk mail in mind. It's also possible to group your messages (by the day they were received, for example) rather than leaving your inbox as one long list of messages. Like its partner program, Firefox, Thunderbird supports plug-ins, which help to extend its functionality. The extensions currently available include a dictionary tool, OpenPGP encryption support, and a tool for setting up a Contact sidebar, similar to that seen in Outlook Express.

Location **\internet\Thunderbird Setup 1.0.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.mozilla.org**

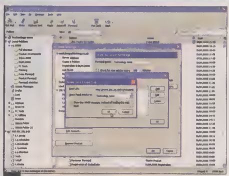
Read RSS news feeds in Mozilla Thunderbird



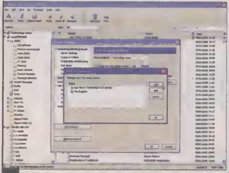
1 To set up Thunderbird to read RSS news feeds, you first need to create an RSS account. Go to Tools/ Account Settings and click the Add Account button. From the Account Wizard dialog, select RSS News & Blogs and click Next.



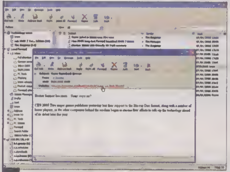
2 Give your new account a suitable name then click Next again, followed by Finish. In the Account Settings dialog, select your new RSS account from the list on the left. From here you can rename the account or change how often Thunderbird checks for new messages.



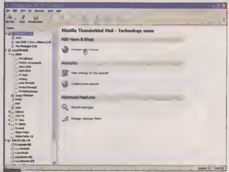
3 Click Manage Subscriptions then select Add to include the details of your first news feed. You will need to know the URL link of the RSS feed you wish to keep track of, such as http://news.bbc.co.uk/rss/newsonline_uk_edition/technology/rss091.xml. This should be listed on the news site's homepage.



4 You can add as many RSS news feeds as you like to the same account, simply by clicking the Add button and including the URL details of each one. The news stories from each feed are kept separate so there's no need to set up a different account for each feed. Click OK and OK again to finish.



5 Your new account will be listed at the top of the Folders pane. Click the + button to expand the account, then select a news feed to view the current headlines. Depending on how you set up the account, clicking a headline will either open the news webpage or a preview with a link to the full story.



6 News stories you aren't interested in can be deleted - deleted stories are moved to the news account's Trash folder, rather than to your email account's Trash. You can amend your settings at any time by clicking on the account's title and selecting View Settings For This Account or Manage Subscriptions.

Firefox - Rediscover the web - Mozilla Firefox
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Free Download
Why Use Firefox?
Support Our Work
Popup Blocking
Tabbed Browsing
Resources and Links

Mozilla's Firefox is being hailed by many as the successor to Internet Explorer

Mozilla Firefox

We couldn't put together a list of the best freeware Internet programs available without mentioning Mozilla's Firefox browser. This compact, yet feature-packed browser is presenting Microsoft with some serious competition and is largely responsible for Internet Explorer's market share falling for the first time in years.

One of the most appealing aspects of Firefox is the fact that it loads webpages in separate tabs on the program window, rather than opening up new windows for every site and pop-up. Speaking of pop-ups, Firefox was doing a sterling job of blocking them long before Microsoft finally decided to introduce a similar feature to Internet Explorer in XP SP2. Mozilla's browser also offers improved privacy and security features, which help to ensure spyware and Browser Helper Objects (BHOs) are less of a problem.

Location **\Internet\Firefox Setup 1.0.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.mozilla.org**

Mozilla offers a range of extras, including a form manager, a cookie manager and an HTML editor

Mozilla Suite

Whilst the young upstart, Firefox, grabs all the headlines, it's the original Mozilla browser that offers the most complete Internet experience. Like Firefox, Mozilla has tabbed browsing and a pop-up blocker, but goes one step further by offering an integrated email and newsgroup client, IRC support, and an HTML editor. If you want one Internet browser that does it all, then look no further.

Location **\Internet\mozilla-win32-1.7.5-installer.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.mozilla.org**

Maxthon

PC users are now spoilt for choice when it comes to advanced alternatives to Internet Explorer. Although less well known than the likes of Mozilla Firefox or Opera, Maxthon (formerly known as MyIE2) is packed with features and deserves its place amongst the best alternatives to Internet Explorer.

Like Opera and Firefox, Maxthon is a tabbed browser, which means each new website opens up as a new tab in the main program window, rather than as a new instance of the program, as is the case with Internet Explorer. Maxthon has much more than just this to offer, though. For example, the program supports Mouse Gestures, which enable you to open and close tabs or navigate between sites by holding down the right mouse button and moving the mouse in specific ways.

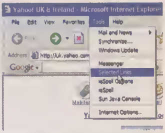
As you would hope, Maxthon features both a pop-up blocker and a Web-advert blocker, meaning you can browse the Internet in relative peace. The program can also be customised through the use of skins and, as in Firefox, there are many plug-ins available to expand the program's functionality.

Location **\Internet\mcombo.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.maxthon.com**

Selected Links

Selected Links is a useful Internet-browsing tool that converts website links into text links you can copy and paste into any program of your choice. The program is extremely easy to use. When you find a set of links you'd like to grab, highlight the links and choose Tools/ Selected Links. Your links are then shown in a pop-up window ready for you to copy to the clipboard. It's also possible to open each of the links in new Internet Explorer windows, rather than copying them to the clipboard. This provides a convenient way to follow a series of links without having to click on each one individually. If you find Selected Links useful you can create a toolbar button for the application rather than having to choose Tools/ Selected Links every time.

Location **\Internet\sellinks.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.mikos.boom.ru**

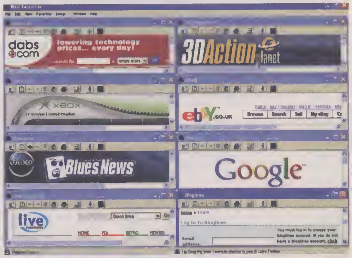

Yahoo! UK & Ireland - Microsoft Internet Explorer
File
Edit
View
Favorites
Tools
Help
Address
http://uk.yahoo.com
Google
Mail and News
Synchronise...
Windows Update
Messenger
Selected Links
ieSpell Options
ieSpell
Sun Java Console
Internet Options...

Highlight the links you want to copy and choose Tools/ Selected Links

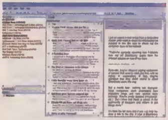
Web Tarantula

Web Tarantula is a multi-windowed browsing tool that enables you to open several different sites at once, all within the same window. This is done without having to open multiple instances of the browser (as you do with Internet Explorer). The main display comprises several windows, each containing a different site, complete with its own navigational controls. The program will automatically open up eight of your favourite websites, each of which can be named by you for quick and easy reference. Each page can be opened up in its own full screen window, and a single button click can then return you to the multiple displays. Whilst this method of browsing might not be suited to more general Web use, it's ideal if you regularly visit the same news sites or forums every morning.

Location **\Internet\webtaran.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.blackspiderwebware.com**


Web Tarantula
dabs.com
lowering technology prices... every day!
3DActionPlanet
XBOX
ebY.co.uk
Blues News
Google
live
Bloglines
Log In To Bloglines

Within a single interface you can view multiple websites



Abilon is a powerful news aggregator that can be used to browse the headlines from hundreds of sites

Abilon

News feeds are one of the steadily growing areas of technology on the Internet, and are used by everyone from worldwide news agencies, like the BBC, to small-time news websites. Abilon is a powerful news aggregator that enables users to draw together headlines from any number of news feeds. The interface looks like a cross between an email client and a tabbed Internet browser, with the full text of selected stories displayed on separate tabs. The program is easy to set up and use, and is recommended to anyone who likes to keep up with the latest news, worldwide.

Location **\internet\InstallAB.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.abilon.org**

URLBase

URLBase is an in-depth bookmarking tool that can be used to import and export your Internet Explorer Favorites and other information to a different browser. You can quickly and easily back up all of your links for safe keeping or you can share them with others online. There's also an email option, which enables you to send your data to others in HTML format.

Location **\internet\url5personalsetup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.terriadev.com**

ToolBarCop

There are numerous helpful additions available for Internet Explorer, such as the Google Toolbar, eBay tools and news tickers. These are useful, but sometimes they can cause problems or prove difficult to get rid of. ToolBarCop takes care of this and lets users remove unwanted items themselves. You can also remove Browser Helper Objects (BHOs) and can view details on installed add-ons.

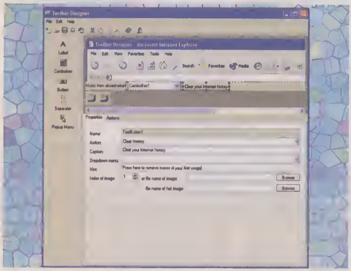
Location **\internet\toolbarcop.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://windowsxp.mvps.org**

Toolbar Designer

One of the most famous Internet Explorer add-ons is the indispensable Google Toolbar. Having the Google search box permanently placed at the top of your screen has helped Google remain the search engine of choice for many Web users. Following the success of the Google toolbar, other Web services have since released their own competing toolbars. This is hardly surprising, as toolbars are extremely useful for the end user and are also the best way to keep visitors coming back to your site. If you've got your own website, there's no reason why you shouldn't benefit from your own toolbar, too, thanks to Toolbar Designer.

It doesn't take long to design and construct your own toolbar as the program is so easy to use. All you do is drop in the components you want - search boxes, drop-down menus or buttons, for example - and add an image to make your toolbar look unique. As you'd expect, any object placed on your toolbar can be customised to suit your needs. Finished toolbars are typically around 400KB in size so they don't take long for visitors to download.

Location **\internet\ToolbarDesignerSetup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.toolbardesign.com**

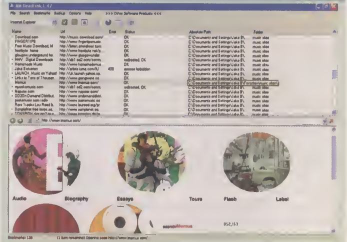


Name: ToolButton1
Action: Clear History
Caption: Clear your Internet history
Dropdown menu:
Hint: Press here to remove traces of your Net usage
Index of image: 1 or file name of image:
file name of hot image:

Create useful buttons to add to your personalised Internet Explorer toolbar

> "IT DOESN'T TAKE LONG TO DESIGN AND CONSTRUCT YOUR OWN TOOLBAR AS THE PROGRAM IS SO EASY TO USE"
>
> *Toolar Designer*

AM-Deadlink



View previews of your bookmarked sites with AM-Deadlink

As most people quickly build up a large collection of Internet bookmarks it's a good idea to keep these well organised, with separate folders for each type. However, this method doesn't account for websites that have gone offline or that have changed their URL since they were added to your Favorites list. If your bookmarks lists runs to hundreds of sites you may find a fair amount of them link to webpages that no longer exist.

AM-Deadlink has been designed to check your bookmarks and highlight websites that have fallen by the wayside. The software also finds duplicates, enabling you to streamline a weighty list. Any dead links and duplicates it uncovers can be easily deleted from your browser. Spending a few minutes running AM-Deadlink will save you hours of manual checking.

It doesn't matter what browser you use, as AM-Deadlink works with all the most popular alternatives. The software makers advise that you verify the dead links it finds before going ahead and deleting them, just in case they were temporarily unavailable. AM-Deadlink can also back up your bookmarks, and some previews of your bookmarked sites.

Location **\internet\disetup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://aignes.com/products.htm**

All the major image file formats are supported, so photos and other images can be included

MakoButton

The buttons on Internet Explorer's taskbar are somewhat limited in their scope. MakoButton enables you to add your own so you can customise the program to your liking. Buttons can be made that launch a website or another application. You can also remove or modify existing toolbar buttons you don't use.

Location **\internet\makobutton.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.mydesktophelp.com/development.htm**

GMail Drive Shell Extension

Google is most famous for being the creator of one of the world's most popular Internet search engines, but the company is also responsible for a number of other Web-based services. The Web-based email service, Gmail (www.gmail.com), is one of the most recent additions to the Google roster.

As well as offering some excellent email search options, the most attractive aspect of Gmail is the fact that every email address comes with a generous 1GB of storage space, which means you don't need to clear out old messages to make room for new ones. The drawback to Gmail is that the only way to get hold of an account is through the recommendation of an existing user.

GMail Drive is an ingenious application that lets you establish a remote connection to your Gmail account. Once connected, you'll be able to access your 1GB of space just as you would a normal hard drive in Windows Explorer. Items can be copied to and from the server and because it's a secure online mail service, only the account holder who knows the username and password can log on. This means you essentially have an extra 1GB hard disk that comes with a good level of security, for free.

Location **\internet\gmailfs.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.viksoe.dk/code/gmail.htm**

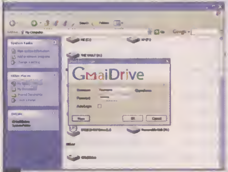
Web Album Generator

Web Album Generator is a great image-sharing program that enables you to create online galleries filled with your captured moments. You can fully customise the style and feel of your gallery and add your images easily. By clicking on a single button, you can then generate the HTML pages required to give your gallery substance. If you're more advanced in the ways of HTML and Web authoring then you can play around with the style sheet configurations. Alternatively, you can simply use one of the supplied items.

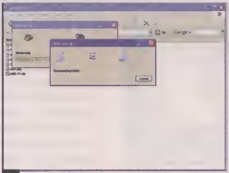
This program is ideal if you don't know much about HTML or Web development and want to be able to share your photos with friends and family. And because it allows users to tinker with the style sheets, accomplished webmasters will also find it useful.

Location **\internet\webalbum_setup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.ornj.net**

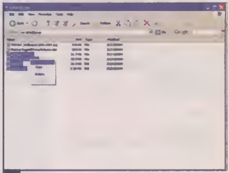
Use Gmail as an extra hard drive with GMail Drive Shell Extension



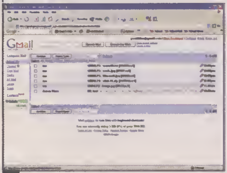
1 Extract the installation files from the archive on the coverdisc (\internet\gmailfs.zip) then double-click setup.exe. Once the help file is displayed, the setup process has finished. Open My Computer, double-click the new GMail Drive entry and log in using your Gmail username and password.



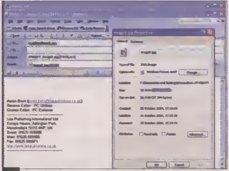
2 The program connects to your Gmail account and opens a window showing you the current contents of your drive (this only lists files copied via GMail Drive). To add files to the drive, simply drag and drop them into the window. Alternatively, use standard Windows shortcuts or right-click commands.



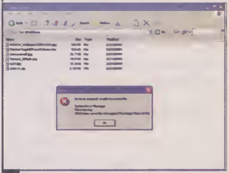
3 To remove files from your new external drive, simply drag them out of the window. Files will be moved from the drive in the same way. You can permanently remove files from the drive by deleting or cutting them, but be careful as there's no Recycle Bin here.



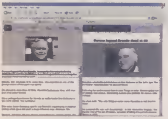
4 With a little cunning, you can even send files to your GMail Drive from any location without using the program. Doing this involves analysing the subject line of the emails sent by GMail Drive when you copy files over. Take special note of the subject line shown in your Gmail Inbox.



5 Using this information, create a new mail in any email client and attach your file. Now make the subject line the same as the GMail Drive item. The long number in brackets is the size of the attachment in bytes (not Size On Disk). The subject should read: GMAILFS: /<file name> [<file size>;a;1].



6 The GMail Drive program has to abide by the attachment size restrictions of the GMail service, so only files under 10MB can be copied to your GMail Drive. If you attempt to copy anything bigger you'll see this error message. Try to keep your files small or split them into smaller sizes.

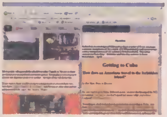


Gather together text and photos about any subject you like

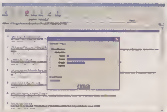
Amplify

The Internet is possibly the most useful research tool ever invented, putting invaluable and previously hard to find information within easy reach. Amplify helps users gather information on the Internet by creating different pages (called amps) in which to store the results. Create a new amp for each subject area you're researching and then every time you come across some relevant text or a suitable image or video clip, highlight it and add it to your amp. You can insert anything into your amp at any time, building up an ever-evolving summary of your Net research.

Location **\Internet\Amplify.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.amplify.com**



Amps are ideal for sharing details about travel destinations

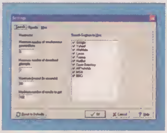


A blue bar shows the progress of each search

Arrow Search

Each search engine uses a different method to locate sites. Try entering the same query into Google and AltaVista, for example, and you'll probably find that you get fairly different results. So, if you want a conclusive set of search results the most logical thing to do is to use as many different search engines as possible. Obviously it would take a great deal of time to query each one individually, but Arrow Search can do it for you in a fraction of the time.

Location **\Internet\Arrow_Search.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.rt-software.co.uk**



You can pick and choose which search engines to use

LostGoggles

Google does a great job of tracking down websites but some may find its sparse interface somewhat lacking. With the aid of LostGoggles, you can add further options to Google searches, including thumbnail previews of sites, webpage statistics and much more.

The basic Google search is unaffected by LostGoggles so you get exactly the same search results as before. The program doesn't create any toolbars and you won't see any obvious indication of its presence until you use Google again.

Location **\Internet\LostGoggles.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://lostgoggles.com**

Scan DL

Scan DL hunts around the Internet looking for file types of your choice. It starts off at any HTML page you specify, following every link on the page in order to sniff out files matching your search criteria. All suitable files are automatically added to a download list, ready to load up into your favourite download manager.

Location **\Internet\scandl_setup.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://scandl.com/en/news.html**

Star Downloader Free

Downloading files from the Net using just your browser puts you at the mercy of unreliable Net connections. Should your download cut off before it completes, you'll have to start again from scratch. If you download a lot of files, it's much more sensible to use a download manager, such as Star Downloader Free. Like all good download managers, Star Downloader lets you resume interrupted transfers and schedule downloads for a time when it won't slow down your normal Internet use. The program can also speed up file transfers by splitting files into multiple sections and piecing them back together when the downloads are complete.

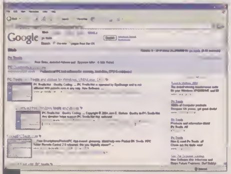
Location **\Internet\sdfree.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.stardownloader.com**

FileZilla

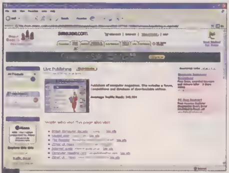
FileZilla is one of the best freeware FTP clients available, and provides everything you could need to transfer files to and from FTP locations. The program enables users to resume interrupted downloads, supports the SFTP protocol and can be operated from behind a firewall.

Location **\Internet\FileZilla_2_2_9_setup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://filezilla.sourceforge.net/**

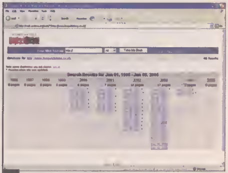
Enhance Google searches with LostGoggles



1 LostGoggles is a plug-in to Internet Explorer, so you don't need to run it to get it to work. Once you've installed the software it automatically enhances your Google searches without requiring any further user intervention. The boring text results you're used to now have thumbnail images and additional useful links.



2 If you want to find out more about any website in the results list, click on the Site info link. This shows you the page's traffic ranking based on the number of hits it has received from users of the Alexa Toolbar. Underneath are links to other sites frequented by visitors to the website.



3 The Archived link takes you to the relevant pages in the Internet Archive Wayback Machine. This is a comprehensive library of old websites dating back to 1986, although the site itself began life back in 2001. Click on the archive date you want to view and then sit back and admire the dated design.

Web CEO

Building your own website can be a rewarding endeavour, but only if you find an audience for your Web-based content. Most search engines scour the Internet for new content to add to their databases but by submitting your site to search engines you can gain a greater degree of control over how your site is categorised and optimise your site's ranking.

There are several freeware tools you can use to submit your site to search engines, but Web CEO is one of the most advanced available. Not only does it enable you to check your site's ranking, but it also suggests keywords, optimises your website, helps you submit it to search engines and audits your site for dead links, slow pages and missing tags. Web CEO also lets you keep track of your site's status, upload files and monitor traffic analysis. Although the Professional version is released as commercial software, a cut-down version of Web CEO is available free, and you can download a comprehensive 50-page Quick Start Guide for it too. This is indispensable for quickly getting to grips with how to promote and maintain your website, and analyse your visitors.

Location **\internet\webceo.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.webceo.com**

DzSoft Favourites Search

Web users are pretty trigger-happy with the Add To Favorites option in Internet Explorer. You never know when you might want to visit a site again, so it's better to be safe than sorry and add it to your Favorites list. This soon builds up a very healthy collection of links, which if you're not careful, can become overwhelming. After you've been browsing the Web for a year or so, it's not unusual to find your favourites list populated with hundreds of links.

If your favourites list is getting a little out of control, DzSoft Favourites Search is here to help. Rather than having to go through your list and spend hours deciding which sites to delete, DzSoft provides a much more agreeable solution. The software creates a left-hand pane in Internet Explorer that offers a search facility. To find a site in your Favorites list, just type in your query and press Find. All the websites in your Favorites list that feature the word in your search query are then displayed underneath. To visit any site, click on its name and you'll be taken straight there.

Location **\internet\dzfav103.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.dzsoft.com**

> "THE PROGRAM IS PACKED WITH POWERFUL OPTIONS"
>
> *AceFTP Freeware*

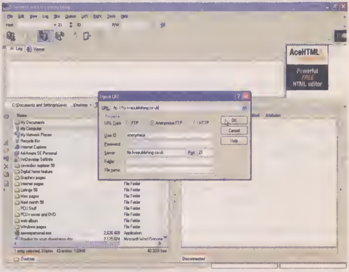
AceFTP Freeware

While a large number of the downloadable files on the Internet are accessible via HTTP links, many files can only be accessed via the File Transfer Protocol (or FTP). Internet Explorer supports FTP but only to a very limited degree. As such, if you intend to transfer files to or from the Web using FTP, you'll be much better served using a dedicated FTP client.

AceFTP Freeware is one of the most widely used cost-free FTP clients, thanks to its range of features, customisability and reliable nature. Some FTP programs can be daunting at first due to their complex interfaces. AceFTP uses a friendly Windows XP-style interface that makes getting started with the program as easy as possible. Despite its user-friendly appearance, the program is packed with powerful options, such as drag-and-drop capabilities, site-management options for Web developers, and the ability to work in conjunction with firewall setups.

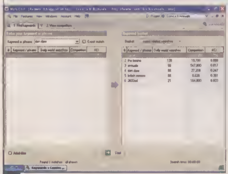
The program must be registered online in order for you to use it, but the registration process is free.

Location **\internet\aceftp3free.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://freeware.aceftp.com**

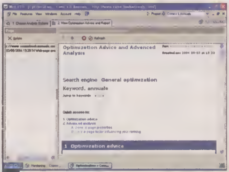


AceFTP is a powerful yet easy-to-use alternative to commercial FTP clients

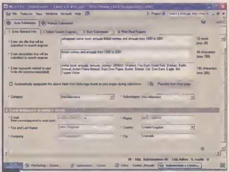
Increase your website's page rank with Web CEO



1 **If you haven't used Web CEO before, start a new project in Project Manager and add the URL of your website. Choose Features/ Keywords for Web CEO's Keyword Suggestion tool. To optimise the keywords your site uses, click the View competitors and Analyze competition tabs.**


Optimization Advice and Advanced Analysis
Search engine General optimization
Keyword. annuals
Optimization advice

2 **The optimisation tool (Features/ Optimization) lets you see your webpages as a search engine robot will see them. This helps you check how relevant they are. The generated report gives general advice about your page and the main factors influencing your ranking, showing how to improve the results.**



3 **After making your improvements you can use Web CEO to submit your site to search engines. Click GO/ Submit URLs and select your site from the Project menu. Work your way through the four tabs entering relevant information. After submission, use Web CEO to see if your page rank has increased.**

Security & antivirus

No-one should underestimate the potential dangers that exist in the PC world – threats from viruses and hackers are very real, and in some instances, very dangerous. Virus writers are developing new infections all the time, with new strains appearing almost every day. New waves of fraudulent emails and a slew of spyware applications represent another reason to make sure that you and your system are protected. Operating a PC without a decent antivirus application and firewall installed is comparable to leaving your front door open with a sign telling people you're out.

Contrary to popular belief, getting your PC outfitted with a layer of essential security protection doesn't need to cost you an arm and a leg. Even many commercial products bought off the shelf are now very affordable, with programs such as Norton AntiVirus or F-Secure costing very little. But, you can save yourself even this small amount by getting your PC equipped with the range of free alternatives that can be found on this issue's coverdisc.

Every area of PC security has been catered for by the freeware development community, and you can now obtain fully functional security suites for nothing. Antivirus tools, firewalls, port blockers, Trojan killers, password managers and much more can all be found. We've got full antivirus suites, including the award winning AVG Anti-Virus 7 Free Edition, which will keep harmful code out of your system. We have privacy protection programs and file shredders to make sure no-one can snoop on your affairs, and we also have tools that will help you get rid of irritating spyware.

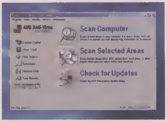
So, don't leave your computer and data at risk any longer and give these programs a go. After all, it's better to be safe than sorry.

AVG Anti-Virus 7 Free Edition

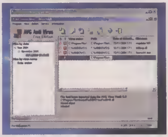
Grisoft's antivirus suite, AVG, is very popular, not only because it's a very reliable and efficient antivirus application, but also because of the dependable freeware version.

AVG possesses all of the features you would expect to see in an antivirus suite, and using it you can perform a full, in-depth system scan. The scanner will check every area of your system, including boot records and memory, and you can select specific areas of your PC should you only need to check a single drive or folder. As with previous versions, AVG includes a file vault where it can safely store troublesome infections, and there's an online updater that will keep you automatically up to date with the latest threats. Additional features in AVG Free Edition include the ability to create an emergency rescue disk that will recover your system in worst case scenarios.

AVG is one of the best freeware antivirus applications around at the moment, and has a level of protection that has won it several awards, including accolades from Virus Bulletin. If your PC isn't protected against viruses and you can't afford to buy an antivirus tool, install AVG Free Edition right away.



AVG Free Edition delivers commercial quality protection without the cost

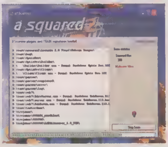


The Virus Vault displays all of the infection previously detected and removed

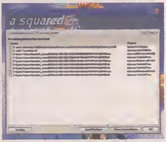
Location **\security and antivirus\ avg70free_298a417.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.grisoft.com**

a2 Free

a2 Free isn't intended as a standalone application, but rather as an addition to your existing security setup. This powerful tool is a competent security solution that can prevent any unwanted items from gaining access to your PC. This includes Trojans, diallers, worms and, of course, spyware. The application continuously monitors your PC for any changes and potential intrusions, and should anything attempt to run on or access your machine, it will be stopped dead in its tracks. This means that any potential threats are nipped in the bud before they even get close.



a2 Free complements your current antivirus suite to provide more secure protection

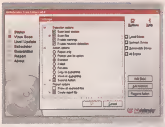


A full report details suspect items and lets you deal with them how you see fit

The program's reported success level is impressive, and a massive 24,000 different items are known by the software. You can update its definitions for free online, meaning you'll always be up to date with the latest threats.

As we've already mentioned, a2 Free is not a standalone antivirus program and is instead a compliment to your system security, so you'll still need to run a dedicated antivirus suite to remain fully protected.

Location **\security and antivirus\a2freesetup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.emsisoft.com**



BitDefender offers professional level features but without the price tag

BitDefender Free Edition

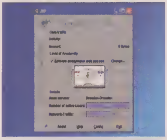
Although best known for its commercial antivirus application, BitDefender also produces this freeware virus detection and removal suite, designed primarily with home users in mind. The program features all the protection capabilities we've come to expect of a virus scanner, including real-time protection, a live update facility and quarantine area. It's also possible to schedule scans so they don't interrupt your PC use.

Location **\security and antivirus\bitdefender_free_win_v72.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.bitdefender.com**

JAP – Anonymity and Privacy

JAP is an Internet security program that will keep your IP address and your PC's details hidden from others. When in operation, the program issues you with a single static IP address that is shared with other JAP users, meaning you'll be safe from prying eyes.

Location **\security and antivirus\japsetup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://anon.inf.tu-dresden.de/index_en.html**



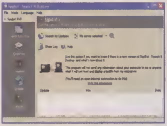
Ensure your browsing privacy with the easy-to-use anonymity tool, JAP

Spybot Search and Destroy

Spybot Search and Destroy is another dependable source of adware and spyware removal technology. Like Ad-Aware, this is an on-demand scanner that can track down and identify any adware or spyware on your PC, such as unwanted Internet toolbars, tracking cookies, and other unwanted additions to your PC.

Spybot will perform a full scan of your system and will display details of any item it finds while on its rounds. Once the scan is complete, you can then remove items safely. To help you do this, the program provides a full report of the scan, including detailed information about each item found and what its task is.

Even if you don't have a clear indication of spyware on your PC (such as the unwanted Internet Explorer toolbars), it's worth running Spybot anyway, as it will usually find some form of hidden spyware for you. Spybot Search and Destroy is amongst the easiest spyware removal tools around, and the whole process is done in just a few mouse clicks.



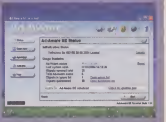
Spybot will immunise your system on first use, instantly protecting you from a large number of threats

Location **\security and antivirus\spybotsd13.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.safer-networking.org**

Ad-Aware SE Personal Edition

Ad-Aware SE Personal Edition is one of the best spyware detection and removal tools available, and is also one of the most dependable and easy-to-use options. The program can quickly perform a full system scan to check for any potential problems, and should you need to, you can run a much more in-depth scan to try to clear out any more troublesome customers. Any spyware items that are found are then presented in a list, and you can then choose what you wish to do with them, such as eliminating them from your system, or moving items to a quarantine zone if you're not sure what they are. This latter option ensures you can restore given components if their removal means certain programs no longer work.

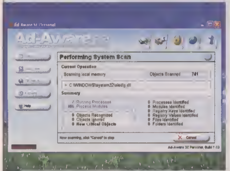
The Internet update option keeps the program up to date at all times, and the added option of bootup scans makes the program useful for getting rid of files that can't be removed normally when access is denied. There may be several new alternatives around now, but this is still amongst the best.



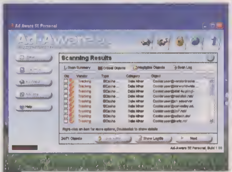
Ensure your system is free of any unwanted spyware with Ad-Aware

Location **\security and antivirus\aawsepersonal.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.lavasoft.com**

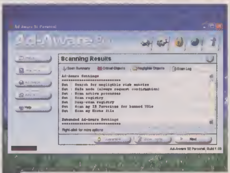
Clean up your system with Ad-Aware SE Personal Edition



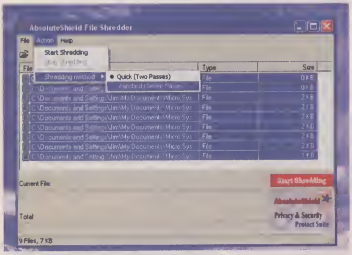
1 Launch the program from the Programs menu and make sure you perform a Web update before carrying out a scan. Click Start and if this is the first time you've run the program then click on Perform full system scan. Click Next and wait while the analysis of your system takes place.



2 When the scan has finished click Next. Under Critical Objects you'll see a list of spyware and adware files that have been discovered. Check the box to place them in Quarantine and prevent further activity. Under the Negligible Objects tab you'll see items not considered a threat but which hold personal information.



3 The Scan Log tab provides information about the analysis. It will advise you as to what settings were used and on what date it was started. There's also a detailed explanation of every item that's been discovered, the reason why it has been tagged as a problem, together with its exact location.



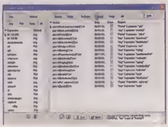
The program offers a choice of shredding methods to suit your requirements and available time

AbsoluteShield File Shredder

Many people are under the misapprehension that when you delete a file it is permanently removed from your hard drive. When you choose to erase an unwanted file all that happens is your PC forgets where that data is located on your hard disk. The data will remain intact, however, until the next bit of information happens to be written to the physical area of your disk that it occupies. This means that those with specialist software and a little bit of computer knowledge can locate and retrieve supposedly deleted items. When you think of the many files that are deleted in the course of a day, which could include temporary files of sensitive business or personal information, you'll realise how dangerous this could be.

When you delete files with AbsoluteShield File Shredder, you needn't worry about them being retrieved because the program immediately overwrites the file multiple times until the original data is completely destroyed beyond any chance of retrieval. The file can be stored on a single floppy disk, making it very handy and portable, and entire hard drives can be wiped with the minimum of effort.

Location **\security and antivirus\fileshredder.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.sys-shield.com**



Set filters to show all unwanted cookies on your hard drive

Cookie Selector

In the days before the Internet, websites were unheard of and cookies were simply something to dunk in your tea. Nowadays, all that has changed and cookies are just as likely to fill up your Temporary Internet Files folder as your biscuit barrel. Cookie files contain information about most website you visit - this isn't usually anything sinister, just your user name and preferences, for example. In most cases, cookies store only details entered when you first visit a website and are used by website servers to reconfigure themselves based on the information provided.

Most shopping carts use cookies to enable you to choose items and return later to the same site with the same filled shopping cart. However, cookies can be used in more annoying ways - to build a profile of which sites you visit and which banner ads you click for marketing purposes.

To search through the cookies on your computer, Cookie Selector applies filters to weed out the bad from the good. You can then delete all unwanted intrusions with one click of your mouse. It's simple to use and only takes a few minutes to clean up your cookies.

Location **\security and antivirus\cookieselectorsetup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.heuristicresearch.com**

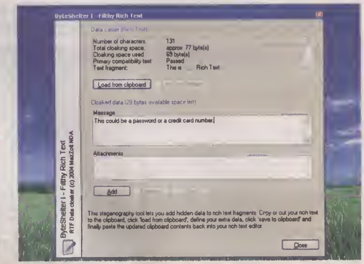
Click the Clean button to leave only the cookies you want to keep

ByteShelter

Steganography is commonly thought of as the science of hiding important text within other types of data, such as an image file or audio track, but you can also hide data within other text if you want to. ByteShelter is a program that can do just this, and by making the most of its steganography features you can hide sensitive information within rich text documents. This text can then be used in emails or documents and anyone stumbling across the message will be none the wiser.

To use the program all you need to do is type out the normal text and copy it to the Windows clipboard. Then you need to grab the text from the clipboard using ByteShelter, add your secret text to the mix, click the Save to Clipboard button and then paste the text wherever you need it. The recipient then copies the text to their clipboard and opens this within ByteShelter and the message will be revealed.

Location **\security and antivirus\bs1.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.mazzoft.com**


ByteShelter I - Filthy Rich Text
Data carrier (Rich Text)
Load from clipboard
Cloaked data (28 bytes available space left)
Message
Attachments
Add
Close
ByteShelter I - Filthy Rich Text
RTF Data cloaker (c) 2004 MazZoft NDA

Number of characters: 131
Total cloaking space: approx 77 byte(s)
Cloaking space used: 69 byte(s)
Primary compatibility test: Passed
Text fragment: This is Rich Text

Message: This could be a password or a credit card number

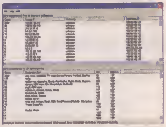
This steganography tool lets you add hidden data to rich text fragments. Copy or cut your rich text to the clipboard, click 'load from clipboard', define your extra data, click 'save to clipboard' and finally paste the updated clipboard contents back into your rich text editor

ByteShelter makes full use of the Windows clipboard to import the text

FireLogXP

If you use the Internet Connection Firewall in Windows XP or the Windows Firewall in Service Pack 2, FireLogXP can provide a log of who is attempting to get into your computer. It also lets you know which ports they are attempting to use. FireLogXP includes links to online resources to give you more information on what each port is for and how it may be being exploited. To use the program with Windows Firewall, select the log file at c:\Windows\pfirewall.log when setting up the program.

Location **\security and antivirus\FireLogXP_Setup.zip**
System **XP**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.2brightsparks.com**



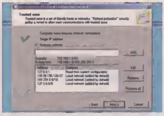
Give the Windows XP firewall a boost with FireLogXP

Jetico Personal Firewall

A good firewall is an integral part of any PC's security setup, but you don't need to fork out a lot of cash to get one. Jetico Personal Firewall is a totally free alternative to the commercial solutions and delivers a great level of protection from external intrusion.

Traffic both to and from your system is monitored by the firewall, and there are three different levels of security supervision. Low-level network packets, applications and user level are all watched, and every packet of data that leaves and enters your system is checked. These packets are permitted access according to your own rules, and should any unauthorised activity be detected, the firewall will take appropriate action. The firewall can even actively learn to perform its task better.

Take control of your system traffic with this powerful freeware firewall



One of the first things you'll need to do is set up trusted zones and configure your personal settings

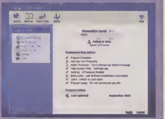
The program is still at the beta stage at present, but it's already looking very impressive and is an alternative to other solutions such as ZoneAlarm or commercial packages.

Location **\security and antivirus\jpfwall.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.jetico.com**

WinGuard Pro 2005

If you share your PC with others and want to prevent them from accessing certain programs and Windows XP features, WinGuard Pro can provide you with all the control you need. With this handy freeware tool it's possible to block access to over fifteen different programs and Windows XP features, including Outlook Express, the Windows XP desktop, Windows Explorer and the Task Manager. You can also block anyone from accessing files and folders of your choice.

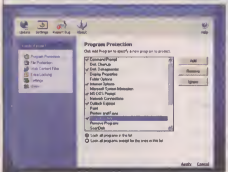
The way the program works is by scanning the title bar of every program and Window you open. When the title bar matches the name of a program or feature you have chosen to block, it immediately locks the program until the correct password is entered. You can also lock individual files and folders by encrypting them and adding password protection. All encrypted files are renamed with the .lock extension (or if you like hidden altogether) and the correct password needs to be entered in order to decrypt them. WinGuard Pro also enables you to stop .zip files and self-extracting archives from being run on your computer.



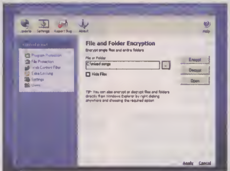
The main WinGuard Pro dialog indicates how well protected you are

Location **\security and antivirus\wgpro.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.winguardpro.com**

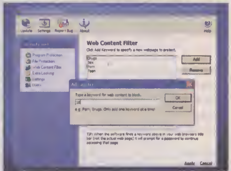
Control system access with WinGuard Pro 2005



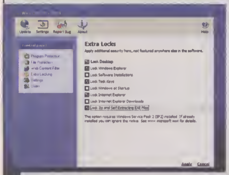
1 The free version of WinGuard enables you to password protect over 15 programs and features. Right-click the WinGuard Pro icon in the System Tray, click Setup and enter the password used during installation. Choose Control Panel/ Program Protection, click the options want to protect and hit Apply.



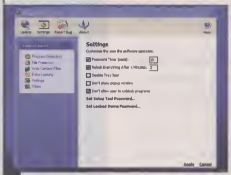
2 If you want to stop users accessing certain files and folders on your computer, go back to the Setup screen and choose File Protection from the Control Panel. Browse to the folder containing the files you want to protect and click Encrypt. To decrypt files again, browse to them and click the Decrypt button.



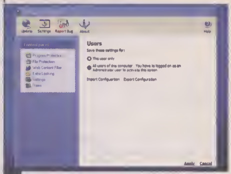
3 To block access to websites containing the words of your choice, return to the Setup screen and choose Web Content Filter from the Control Panel. For each word you want to include, simply click Add and then type in the word. Add as many words as you like and then click Apply.



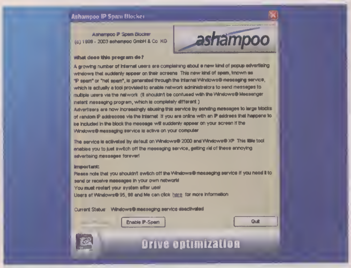
4 Click on Extra Locking in the Control Panel for eight additional options. With the free version of WinGuard Pro you can't lock software installations or Internet Explorer Downloads, but the other six options are available. Tick the boxes next to the options you want to block and then click Apply.



5 Via the Settings option on the Control Panel you can decide how long to give users to enter the correct password. You can also use the Settings option to change the passwords for both WinGuard Pro and for all locked programs, and decide whether to stop users accessing the System Tray icon.



6 The free version of WinGuard Pro only enables you to apply locking features for all users, although you need to have Windows XP Administrator access to do this. The upgraded version includes the option to lock options for the current user account, which further increases the program's versatility.



Ashampoo IP Spam Blocker
(c) 1999 - 2003 ashampoo GmbH & Co KG

What does this program do?

A growing number of Internet users are complaining about a new kind of popup advertising windows that suddenly appear on their screens This new kind of spam, known as "IP spam" or "net spam", is generated through the internal Windows® messaging service, which is actually a tool provided to enable network administrators to send messages to multiple users via the network (It shouldn't be confused with the Windows® Messenger instant messaging program, which is completely different)
Advertisers are now increasingly abusing this service by sending messages to large blocks of random IP addresses via the Internet If you are online with an IP address that happens to be included in the block the message will suddenly appear on your screen if the Windows® messaging service is active on your computer

The service is activated by default on Windows® 2000 and Windows® XP This little tool enables you to just switch off the messaging service, getting rid of these annoying advertising messages forever!

Important:
Please note that you shouldn't switch off the Windows® messaging service if you need it to send or receive messages in your own network!
You must restart your system after use!
Users of Windows® 95, 98 and Me can click here for more information

Current Status Windows® messaging service deactivated

Disable the Windows messaging service with a simple button click

Ashampoo IP Spam Blocker

If you've yet to upgrade to Windows XP Service Pack 2, you may still be bothered by Windows Messenger pop-ups appearing onscreen, offering university diplomas or less savoury deals. If so, you should install and run this useful tool. Its sole purpose it to disable the Windows service that allows these messages to appear, eliminating IP messaging spam and letting you use your PC in peace.

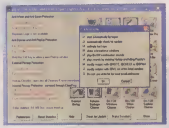
Location **\security and antivirus\ ashampoo_ip_spam_blocker_fe.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.ashampoo.com**

All-in-One Secretmaker

As you browse the Internet, your Web browser logs the names of sites you've visited along with some details that you may have entered into them. Aside from the space these logs take up on your hard disk they're usually harmless enough, but in the hands of an unscrupulous colleague or computer repairer, this information could threaten your privacy and security.

If you don't want anyone gaining access to your online banking details or Net history you need a way to rid your system of these history files. All-in-One Secretmaker can do this and more with a collection of nine tools for blocking pop-ups or banner ads and even searching out viruses or stopping spam getting to your POP3 email account. Most importantly though, the program tracks down temporary files and records of your visited URLs, deleting them from your hard disk to make your computer secure. With All-In-One Secretmaker installed you can send your PC for repairs or let co-workers use it safe in the knowledge that your history files won't divulge any private information.

Location **\security and antivirus\ secretmakersetup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.secretmaker.com**



All-in-One Secretmaker's automated running can take the effort out of maintaining privacy

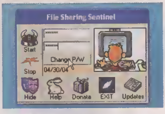
File Sharing Sentinel

Parental control programs for the Internet are nothing new, but not all of them block access to files-sharing networks. It's all very well preventing children from accessing websites with adult content, but you'd be well advised not to ignore the seedier side of file-sharing services. Networks such as Kazaa and Morpheus are a potential minefield for children, with thousands of adult images and other undesirable material exchanged every day. Pornographic photos, video clips and even text files of adult stories can be stumbled across even in innocuous searches.

Rather than letting your child find out the hard way, File Sharing Sentinel keeps file-sharing networks off your PC completely. With the software running invisibly in the background, file-sharing services can't be installed or accessed in any way, enabling you to rest easy when you're not able to directly supervise your children's computer use.

The program doesn't stop at blocking access to file-sharing networks either. It also prevents spyware being installed on your computer, helping to ensure your system security and privacy.

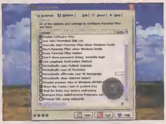
Location **\security and antivirus\ File_Sharing_Sentinel.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.akidthaine.com**



Choose a password and leave File Sharing Sentinel running in the background

Parental Filter

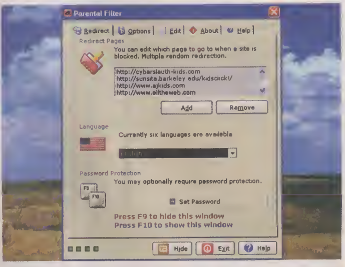
It's an unfortunate fact of life that the Internet, like so many other good things, has its darker side. This side of the Net is filled with undesirable images, dubious subjects and even frightening content. As adults, most of us can deal with such things and avoid them completely, but children don't have such skills at an early age, which is where applications such as this come in.



Parent Filter has a large array of options, including checking Internet Explorer settings and Favorites

Parental Filter enables you to create a database of websites that your children are allowed to visit and a similar list of blocked sites. Should they try to access a site on the blacklist, they will be blocked and can be diverted to a predetermined site set up by you. This redirection can randomly choose from a large list of sites, so the alternate site will change every time a blocked site is hit. Parental Filter works with your standard browser, and there's password option for increased protection. The program runs silently in the background, so your children needn't even know that the program is watching out for them.

Location **\security and antivirus\ ParentalFilterSetup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://users.tpg.com.au/adslgoej**



Redirect Pages
You can edit which page to go to when a site is blocked. Multiple random redirection.

http://cybersleuth-kids.com
http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/kidsclick!/
http://www.ajkids.com
http://www.ellteweb.com

Language
Currently six languages are available

Password Protection
You may optionally require password protection.

☐ Set Password

Press F9 to hide this window
Press F10 to show this window

The redirected site list can contain a whole collection of sanctioned sites

WIN a copy of Diskeeper 9.0 Home Edition

£240 worth of prizes to be won!

We've got 10 copies of this excellent system maintenance tool – worth £23.99 each – to give away!

If you want to get the best possible performance out of your Windows PC, undertaking regular system maintenance is essential. One of the most important elements of system maintenance – and the one that so often gets overlooked – is defragmenting your hard drive to optimise file access speeds. The Windows Disk Defragmenter is an adequate tool for the task, but it's slow and lacks any built-in scheduling options. The technology behind the Windows XP defrag tool was developed in conjunction with Executive Software, so why not cut out the Microsoft middleman and go straight to the source?

Executive Software's defragmentation tool, Diskeeper 9.0 Home Edition, is much more powerful than its Windows cousin, making the whole defrag process a quicker and simpler affair. The program's fully automatic nature means you don't need to remember to run a defrag operation – whenever your system begins to suffer from fragmentation, Diskeeper steps in to get things running smoothly once more. Unlike the Windows tool, Diskeeper can be run in the background without stealing resources required by other programs or processes. It can even be set to come on every time your screensaver kicks in, so the program will be working hard, even when you're not.

For more information about Diskeeper Home Edition, the more powerful Professional Edition, or any of the other programs in Executive Software's range of Windows products, visit **www.execsoft.co.uk** or call 01342 327477.

PC Tools has teamed up with Executive Software to let 10 lucky readers win their own copy of Diskeeper 9.0 Home Edition. To enter, all you need to do is answer the question below and send your entry to us by 24 March 2005. Alternatively, you can email your entry to **comp@pctoolsmagazine.com**, putting 'Diskeeper competition' in the subject line.

Home Edition
Diskeeper 9
"Set It and Forget It" Disk Defragmenter for Windows
SPEED UP YOUR PC
INCREASE SPEED • RELIABILITY • DISK HEALTH
Executive Software

COMPETITION RULES

1. Competitions are open to all residents of the UK, except employees of Live Publishing and the promoter and their immediate families, the promoter's advertising agency and anyone else connected with the creation and administration of the promotion.
2. By entering a competition, competitors agree to be bound by the rules and by any other requirements set out in the promotional material.
3. The promoters reserve the right to disqualify incomplete, altered or illegible entries. No responsibility will be accepted for entries lost, delayed or damaged in the post or insufficiently pre-stamped. Proof of posting will not be accepted as proof of delivery.
4. There is no cash alternative to any of the prizes. The decision of the editor will be final and binding and no correspondence will be entered into.
5. The closing date for the receipt of entries is 24 March 2005 and the winners will be informed as soon as possible thereafter. The results of the competition will be published in a future issue.
6. No multiple entries.
7. No purchase necessary.
8. Please indicate on your entry if you do not wish to be contacted about other products or offers from Live Publishing or other companies.
9. Winners may be required to take part in publicity accompanying or as a result of this competition.
10. The competition is only open to UK residents.
11. We reserve the right to substitute the prize for a similar item of equal or higher value if the stated prize is not available.

Diskeeper 9.0 Home Edition competition

Q Diskeeper can improve PC performance by defragmenting which part of your system?

☐ Hard drive ☐ Power supply ☐ CD-ROM

Name ....

Address ....

.... Postcode ....

Telephone number ....

Email address ....

Send your entry to Diskeeper competition, PC Tools, Live Publishing International Ltd, Europa House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK10 4NP.
Closing date 24 March 2005.

☐ Tick if you do not wish to receive promotional material from other companies
☐ Tick if you do not wish to receive promotional material from Live Publishing
Competition open to UK residents only

Audio & video

As the PC market evolves, home computer systems are becoming more diverse in terms of their capabilities. Devices that were once thought of as just work tools are now true multimedia appliances. Thanks to the growth in PC technology, we now have home computers that can do so much more than desktop publishing or producing spreadsheets, and that can sit comfortably alongside your TV, DVD and console as a home entertainment fixture.

One major area in which the PC excels is audio and video. All aspects of these fields are catered for, and the home computer is just as comfortable editing and creating media as it is playing it. Audio CDs, music files (such as .mp3), DVDs, video files, digital camcorders, webcams and much more can all be used with the PC, and thanks to the raft of software available, you can edit and play around with items to your heart's content, or develop your own multimedia creations from scratch.

Over the next few pages we'll take a look at some of the best and totally free tools that let you take complete control of digital audio and video files. We've got music and video players, audio editors, Internet radio players, video-editing tools, MIDI programs and more. We even have a totally free application that will turn your PC into a fully functional media centre, which can be used to play DVDs, listen to music and even watch TV – all through one interface installed on your PC.

So, if you want to get creative with your PC, or you'd just like to listen to some music, have a flick through this section and you'll find the tool you need.

Ashampoo Media Player+

Ashampoo Media Player+ is one of the most promising media players around at the moment, giving the likes of Winamp and Windows Media Player a serious run for their money. The program is capable of playing over 20 different file types, including popular formats such as .mp3, .avi, .wav and more. This number isn't fixed, however, as the player is modular in nature, supporting plug-ins that add extra functionality. This means you'll be able to add even more functionality to the program when new plug-in files become available.

Custom skins can be used and a graphic equaliser is also included

"YOU CAN EVEN GENERATE PLAYLISTS THAT INCORPORATE FTP AND NETWORK FOLDERS"

Ashampoo Media Player+

Like any self-respecting media player, Ashampoo Media Player+ features a range of visualisations

As we've said, the program can play both audio and video files, and as with many media players, there's a range of different physical configurations available – from a small title bar-like player to a full-sized movie window. Another of the player's major features are the dynamic playlists that change automatically when you add tracks to or remove tracks from your system, meaning you don't have to keep creating new lists. You can even generate playlists that incorporate FTP and network folders, so the music doesn't even need to be on your system.

Other features include custom skinning, the ability to set the volume for each individual track, and the impressive option of burning your playlists to CDs, complete with autorun capabilities, using the BurnIt! add-on.

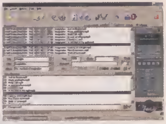
Location **\audio and video\ashampoo_mediaplayer_203_fm.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.ashampoo.com**

MP3 File Editor

MP3 File Editor (MP3FE) is a very powerful file-organising application that will enable you to keep tabs on all your music files with ease. Using the program you can not only find specific tracks in your collection, but you can also create custom playlists, print out inventories and export them to other media, such as an Excel spreadsheet.

The drag-and-drop interface is easy to use, and there's a built-in player included, so you can catalogue and listen to your music using a single package.

Location **\audio and video\mp3fe.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.mp3fe.com**



Manage and listen to the songs in your music collection using MP3 File Editor

1337Player

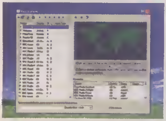
Despite its geek-speak name, 1337Player is in fact a standard media player for Windows. Unlike many alternatives, the program features full support for DirectX 9, and is also able to use subtitles, zoom and fast seek, as well as the usual media player tools.

Location **\audio and video\1337player.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.daansystems.com**

Internet Radio Tuner

Although traditional radio stations may be losing listeners by their thousands, Internet-based radio stations are thriving. A staggering number are available via the Web, broadcasting from countries across the world. There are stations that cater for specific musical tastes, specialist stations such as news or sport channels, and others that focus on general musical entertainment. Tuning into these stations can be done in different ways, which is where this handy program comes in.

Internet Radio Tuner is just that - a radio tuner that can pick up and play Internet-based radio signals. Using the program you can choose from a massive selection of predefined stations, or you can add your own favourite stations if you find they aren't already included. As with any normal radio, you can save a number of preset stations to memory - a full listing of stations, complete with genre and location, is provided. Don't mind what you listen to? Then you can use the I Feel Lucky button to pick a radio station at random. To complete the package, the program is also able to record radio stations, so you can listen to them later.



The station database is huge - by clicking on a location you can find local stations

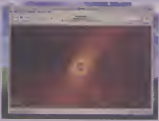
Location **\audio and video\IRT_19beta_Setup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://bleucanard.mark1hosting.net**

iTunes

iTunes has been around for many years and is the leading media player for the Mac operating system. Until recently, though, it wasn't been available for Windows PCs. Well, all that's changed with the release of iTunes for Windows - a great audio player that offers an excellent alternative to Windows Media Player.

As well as enabling you to catalogue and play your audio files, iTunes also provides easy access to a wide range of online radio stations. Like its Microsoft alternative, iTunes even enables you to create audio CDs from tracks you have stored on your computer. To create an audio CD, all you need to do is set up a playlist, then select the Burn Playlist to Disc option. As long as you have a CD-R disc in your CD writer, iTunes will do the rest for you.

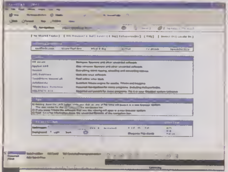
One of the biggest attractions of the iTunes media player, is its connection with Apple's iTunes Music Store – a commercial music download service that charges per track or album. Individual tracks can be downloaded for as little as 79p each, and full albums can be yours for prices starting from £7.99. Downloaded tracks can even be burnt to disc using iTunes.



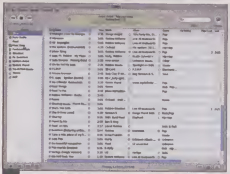
iTunes offers a fresh, clean interface that is a welcome alternative to that of Media Player

Location **\audio and video\iTunesSetup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.apple.com/uk/itunes**

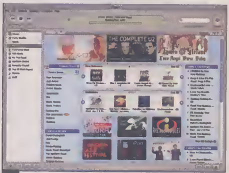
Use the iTunes Music Store



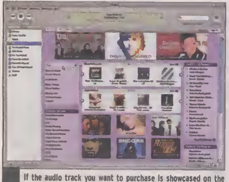
1 While it's possible to download music for free from the Internet, the legality of the process is dubious to say the least. Furthermore, you may be limited by the choice available, not to mention the fact that audio quality can sometimes be poor.



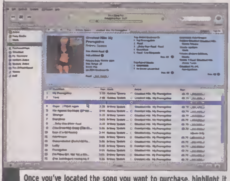
2 Apple's online Music Store can be accessed via iTunes – it allows you to browse through available tracks and listen to a 30-second preview before deciding whether or not to purchase a track. For 79p you'll get a legal music download, the quality of which is guaranteed.



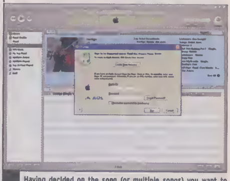
3 To access the store make sure you're connected to the Internet and click on Music Store. On the page that appears you'll see details of download charts, all the latest releases and a selection of recordings that are available exclusively to the iTunes Music Store.



4 If the audio track you want to purchase is showcased on the iTunes Music Store homepage then click on the link. If you just want to browse, click on Genre and search through the listings. Alternatively, go to Power Search if you're trying to locate a specific track.



5 Once you've located the song you want to purchase, highlight it in iTunes, then click on the Play button. This won't play the whole tune, just a 30-second preview so you can determine whether this is the tune you're after. It's possible to do this with any of the thousands of songs that are available in the Music Store.



6 Having decided on the song (or multiple songs) you want to purchase, click Buy Song. You'll need to log in with your Apple ID and create an account for use in the store. With you're account created, click on Buy Song against any track to download it to iTunes.

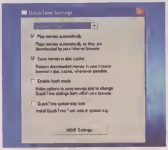
Play QuickTime movies without installing Apple's bloated player

QuickTime Alternative

Apple's QuickTime player is a staple tool for Web users, and if you want to be able to watch movie or game trailers online, then it's a fair bet you'll have to play QuickTime files at some point. The official Apple QuickTime player is available in a free format, and downloading it is easy, but it's not without its problems - QuickTime's incessant offers to 'upgrade' to the Pro version, and its intrusion into your Taskbar and startup routines.

QuickTime Alternative is a substitute for the official player, which, unlike Apple's program, doesn't constantly bombard you with requests for updates or unwanted services. The package installs both a media player module and the required QuickTime codecs. Once installed, you'll be able to play any .mov file, without having to install the extra baggage that comes with the official program.

Location **\audio and video\quicktimealt139.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://home.hccnet.nl/h.edskes/finalbuilds.htm**



QuickTime Settings

☑ Play movies automatically
Plays movies automatically as they are downloaded by your Internet browser

☑ Save movies in disk cache
Retains downloaded movies in your Internet browser's disk cache, whenever possible.

☐ Enable kiosk mode
Hides options to save movies and to change QuickTime settings from within your browser

☐ QuickTime system tray icon
Install QuickTime Task icon in system tray

All of the usual QT settings are included, as the program uses the QuickTime codecs

MediaPortal

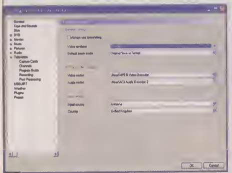
MediaPortal a totally free application that is capable of performing the majority of tasks offered in Windows XP Media Center Edition. You can use the program to watch TV via your existing TV card, listen to music, manage and view photos, get updates on the weather, and even catalogue your recipes. The program bears a strong resemblance to Windows XP Media Centre Edition and has a similar all-in-one interface, meaning you can manage everything without having to jump in and out of other programs.

Once it's installed on your system, it's possible to run it just like any other application. When you do, you'll see the main menu from which you can select the different modules. In order to use the program properly you'll first need to check out the settings of Media Portal, as some things need to be set up beforehand.

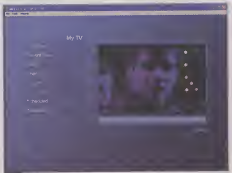
Before you give Media Portal a try, we should mention that the program is currently in the beta stage of development. This means that although the developer has released it to the public, it's still a work in progress and as such may contain some bugs and problems you may experience problems with some of the program's functions or it might not work at all. However, as the program is still in development and is an Open Source project, it's always worth checking the website for updated versions as they appear on a regular basis and often fix bugs and glitches.

Location **\audio and video\MP08122004.zip**
System **XP**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://mediaportal.sourceforge.net**

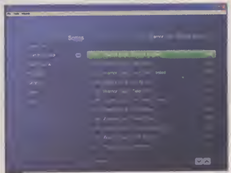
Create a home theatre PC with Media Portal



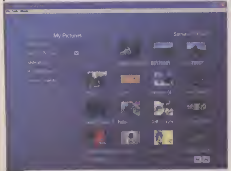
1 As the program is still in the early stages of development, many options need a little preparation before you can use them. First, we'll look at the TV option. Select Tools/ Options and then Television. Select the settings that correspond to your hardware (TV or capture card) and click OK.



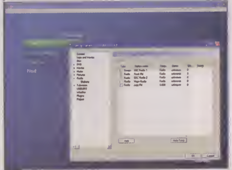
2 After restarting the program and selecting the required options you should be able to use the TV module to watch TV. If you encounter any problems visit **http://nolenparty.com/mediaportal.sourceforge.net/phpBB2** - you should find help for your specific problem in the forums.



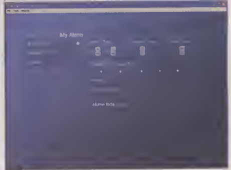
3 The Music module can be used to play audio CDs. It displays the track names and also supports playlists. To use the feature, simply load a CD into your drive and enter the Music module. Select the CD drive and then click on an audio track to begin playing.



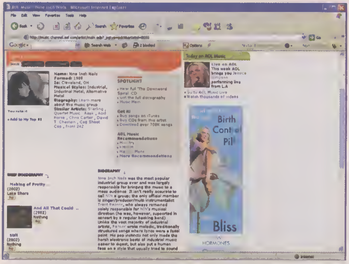
4 One of the program's best features is the picture viewer. To use this you first have to configure the program. Select Tools/ Options/ Pictures/ Picture Shares and browse to your image directory. You can now view your images in the Picture module.



5 To use the Radio function, enter the details of the radio stations. Select Tools/ Options/ Radio/ Stations and click Add. Now enter the name and URL (for Web-based streaming), frequency (for conventional radio broadcasts) or press Auto Tune if your tuner hardware is set up.



6 If you struggle to get up in the morning then Media Portal can help. Go to Tools/ Plugins and tick the Alarm option. Select the My Alarm module and set the alarm time and a playlist. At the desired time the program will play the chosen tracks, giving you your own customised wake-up call.



By clicking on the artist in the radio player you can access a wealth of online info about your favourite acts

Radio@Netscape

If you like to keep up to date with the latest tunes without spending all your wages on CDs and music downloads, then Internet radio is a great, legal source of the freshest music. The problem is, with so many stations around, how do you find one that suits your musical tastes and provides you with all the information you want about your favourite bands?

With Radio@Netscape this is no longer a problem as the software gives you access to over 150 pre-programmed music channels and enables you to access information about every track and band as it plays each tune. Allowing for a high level of interaction, the player even lets you rate each song so DJs can keep track of which songs are popular with their audience and compile weekly favourites charts.

If you only plan to listen to a select few stations, you can also assign your own presets to the player, slotting your favourite stations into pre-assigned positions for easy access. If you really like a track, there's a Buy CD option in the player, giving you access to an online music vendor.

Location **\audio and video\nsradio.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.spinner.com**

WavePad

Whether you just enjoy warbling into a microphone or you're a musician who's serious about your performances, recording and editing audio on your PC is a great way of improving your technique and learning to make your tracks sound better. However, many audio recorders can be complicated and prohibitively expensive for those just starting out with digital recording.

WavePad is a freeware audio recording suite that's extremely easy to use and has all you'll need to get underway. The software enables you to take tracks from a CD, microphone or any other device connected to the input jacks of your soundcard and presents the resulting audio as a graphical waveform. Segments of this wave can then be selected in order to preview, cut, copy, insert or delete sections to give you the completed track that you want.

Once your basic editing is complete, you can then apply special effects to the track, choosing from a selection of echoes, filters and fades to enhance your sound further. It's even possible to normalise volume levels across a track in order to prevent unpleasant peaks.

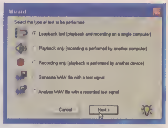
> **"WAVEPAD IS A FREEWARE AUDIO RECORDING SUITE THAT'S EXTREMELY EASY TO USE AND HAS ALL YOU NEED TO GET UNDERWAY"**
>
> *WavePad*

Location **\audio and video\wpsetup.exe**
System **XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.nch.com.au**

RightMark Audio Analyser

There are an incredible number of soundcards available and deciding which to buy can be difficult. At one end of the spectrum are the basic entry-level internal stereo soundcards - the kind often supplied with new computers - which are fine for your day-to-day computing needs but little more. Those with more ambitious audio requirements will find that soundcards with line inputs and outputs suit their needs better, as external audio equipment, such as a record player or cassette deck, can be hooked up to them. Anyone with a serious interest in making music will want an external soundcard with dozens of line inputs and outputs, and numerous microphone and guitar inputs. However, film fans will be better served by a multi-channel soundcard supporting the very latest surround sound formats. Whatever you opt for, you then have to decide which model is best. It's no wonder buying a soundcard can quickly turn into a headache.

To help you make a more informed choice, Right Mark Audio Analyser benchmarks the performance of your soundcard. It uses frequency analysis algorithms to rate each soundcard scientifically. It's then possible to compare different soundcards based on their score.

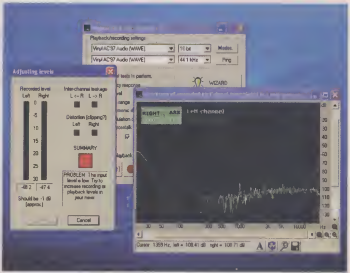


Select the type of test to be performed

- ● Loopback test (playback and recording on a single computer)
- ○ Playback only (recording is performed by another computer)
- ○ Recording only (playback is performed by another device)
- ○ Generate WAV file with a test signal
- ○ Analyse WAV file with a recorded test signal

Right Mark Audio Analyser lets you run a series of tests to benchmark your soundcard

Location **\audio and video\rmaa54.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://audio.rightmark.org**



Playback/recording settings
Vinyl AC'97 Audio (WAVE) 16-bit
Vinyl AC'97 Audio (WAVE) 44.1 kHz

PROBLEM The input level is low. Try to increase recording or playback levels in your mixer

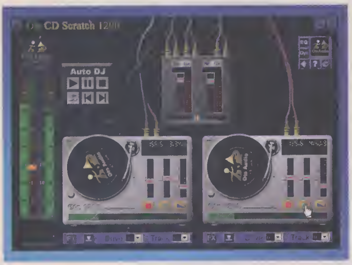
Cursor 1359 Hz, left = 108.41 dB right = 108.71 dB

The program makes use of test signals in order to analyse soundcard performance

DivXLand Subtitler

DivXLand Subtitler is an excellent time-saving video subtitle application that enables users to apply subtitles to movies on the fly. Subtitles can be instantly viewed, and features include automatic timing limit, easy caption editing and varying caption modes. The program is also standalone, and no installation is required.

Location **\audio and video\DivXLand_Subtitler_150.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.divxland.org**



Ots CD Scratch looks great and sounds superb too

Ots CD Scratch

Ots CD Scratch is an interesting variation on the tried-and-tested DJ software genre. Instead of working with .mp3 files like most other DJ software currently available, Ots CD Scratch enables you to DJ using real CDs. If you have two drives you can turn your PC into a powerful CD DJ console, but even with only a single CD drive, the software is clever enough to work seamlessly (you just have to DJ using different tracks from the same CD).

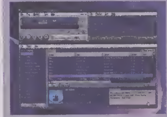
The program provides different scratching effects, which are easy to apply and sound realistic. You can even apply surface noises to your CD tracks to make them sound like vinyl. As well as the usual pitch controls, the software also features a graphic equaliser for tweaking the EQ settings, and a compressor and limiter. It's not only possible to slow a song down but to play it in reverse too.

If you have a laptop with an internal and external CD drive you could easily use it to DJ professionally, saving you the cost and effort of buying and carting around expensive and bulky dual CD DJ decks and a CD mixer.

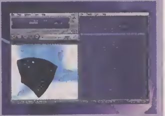
Location **\audio and video\otscdscratch1200setup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://otslabs.com**

Winamp 5

Despite the recent news that Winamp may not benefit from any further major updates, the hugely popular player is still every bit as essential as it ever was. As many users disliked the completely redesigned program that previously surfaced as Winamp 3, Nullsoft went back to the drawing board for this new release. Winamp 5 takes the best elements of 2 and 3 (hence the jump forward to number 5) to create an all-inclusive player for your media files, and adds to this facilities for tuning in to Internet-based radio broadcasts and watching video files. It even includes the ability to rip audio CDs as digital music tracks, though you can only save files in AAC (.m4u) format using the free version of Winamp.



Winamp 5 gives you information on all the tracks in your media library



The new player comes with some new animations to brighten your desktop

Winamp 5's advanced media manager and playlist editor enables you to sort files and create your own playlists in any way you like, as well as listen to your .mp3 tracks in the order that they appear on their original albums. Add to this the Winamp Agent for listing track information, the familiar equaliser for adjusting your audio levels, some new visualisations and a choice of snazzy new skins and you've got a player that's not only reliable and easy to use but also a good-looking addition to your desktop.

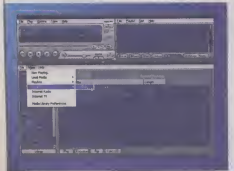
Location **\audio and video\winamp508_full.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.winamp.com**

Chordernote

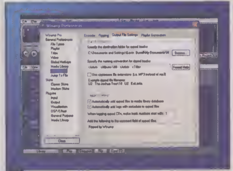
Chordernote will come in handy if you write songs using a guitar or you're simply learning to play. The program is a music notebook enabling you to add chord notations to your lyrics. Once you've typed out your lyrics all you have to do is insert the on-screen chords in the appropriate places in your tune. You can then use it to practise your tracks.

Location **\audio and video\ChorderNote.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://members.fortunecity.com/jimbits**

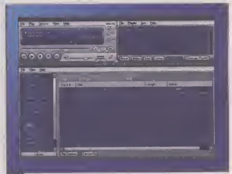
Rip CD tracks with Winamp 5



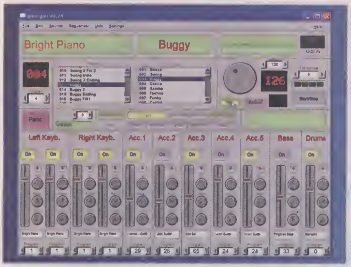
1 Winamp is now capable of ripping audio CDs to digital tracks. To do this, insert an audio CD in your CD/DVD-ROM drive and in Winamp's Media Library, click View/ Devices. If you have an active Net connection, the program will look up the CD's track and artist information online.



2 At the bottom of the Media Library pane, click Rip and select CD Ripping Preferences. Select the bitrate you require on the first tab (128KB/s is fine) then go to the Output File Settings tab to choose where to save the files and how they should be named. Click Close to exit.



3 If you wish to burn all the tracks on the CD, simply click Rip/ Rip All Tracks. To grab only certain tracks, select the songs you want by holding down the Ctrl key and left-clicking each one, then click Rip/ Rip Selected Tracks. In the free version of Winamp, you can only rip a 2x speed, so it may take a while.



The gmorgan MIDI synthesiser lets you choose the style and pattern of your backing track

gmorgan

This well-designed MIDI synthesiser is capable of emulating the sounds and features of many expensive commercial hardware keyboards. The program is ideal for arranging MIDI accompaniments you can play along to, as it automatically generates backing tracks without you needing to play them yourself. The program uses preset styles to fill out your music with chords and the sounds of your choice and also has a small pattern-based sequencer, allowing you to arrange songs in detail. The output from gmorgan can be routed to any MIDI device, or you can simply use your soundcard's MIDI synthesiser. It's possible to load up to 500 patterns into the program, incorporating many different preset styles such as samba and swing.

The synthesiser has a virtual onscreen keyboard that you can use to generate the backing tracks for your songs. When you press a key it produces the corresponding chords, played in the style of your choice. If you feel confident enough, it's also possible to generate the accompaniment by simply writing the name of the chords in the bars of the sequencer window.

Location **\audio and video\gmorgan.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://gmorgan.sourceforge.net**

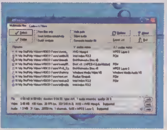
AVIcodec

If you don't have the correct codec for a video file, you may encounter errors or be restricted to audio playback only. AVIcodec can be used to detect the required codec to play any given .avi file - simply run this program to find out what codec is required. The program will detail the codec and will also supply links to online locations where it can be downloaded. You can also find out about the codecs already installed on your system.

> **"AVICODEC CAN BE USED TO DETECT THE REQUIRED CODEC TO PLAY ANY GIVEN .AVI FILE "**
>
> *AVIcodec*

As it's not advisable to download and install codec packs containing multiple items, this is a great tool to have - it will help you keep your installed codecs to only those items that are needed.

Location **\audio and video\AVIcod11.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**



AVIcodec is an excellent tool for gathering codec information

DVD Genie

Most software DVD players and, indeed, DVD drives are region locked to your own location, preventing you from playing DVDs from other regions. This means you can't view American or Japanese DVDs in the UK, despite the fact that the movie in question may not be available in your region. Luckily, there are ways around this, and DVD Genie is one option. It allows many popular software DVD players to change region, opening up the world of film to your PC. So, if you're drive allows region changing, it's well worth installing, as you'll be able to play any DVD on your PC.

Location **\audio and video\dvdgn410.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**Contact
http://avicodec.duby.info
Contact **www.inmatrix.com**

DubIt

DubIt is a freeware soundtrack tool that enables you to apply your own audio tracks to .avi files in real time. Using the program, it's possible to add soundtracks to any .avi file easily. Your video file can benefit from narration, or if you need to you can incorporated background music or ambient effects by importing the required audio from .wav files.

The major benefit of the program is that you can record your audio tracks while still viewing the video. This means you can get the sound spot on as you record, and you can edit the track later on in post-processing. It's not just video that can be dubbed either - the program is also capable of applying audio to images such as .bmps, .jpgs and .gifs. Additional features include the ability to automatically increase the length of a movie or image to suit the soundtrack, and to annotate images, captures or movies without any additional tools.

Instead of adding sound to a movie and then synchronising the audio, record it in real time

Location **\audio and video\dubit.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://techsmith.com**

SplitCam

If you try to use multiple video-capture devices on your PC at once (such as a webcam and a video camera), you'll often receive an error as only one device can be used at a time. SplitCam, however, is a video driver that splits the video feed allowing the use of multiple devices.

Location **\audio and video\splitcam_setup.exe**
System **XP/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.splitcamera.com**

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Graphics

As digital photography steadily grows in popularity, more and more people are using their PCs to store, display and edit images. Although Windows XP offers plenty of options for viewing your images, including its handy Filmstrip view and slideshow functions, it's not well enough equipped to organise or edit images. To do either of these you're much better off using dedicated software, of which there is a massive selection available.

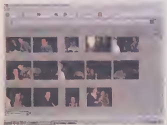
The most popular image-editing tools, such as Adobe's Photoshop Elements, and Jasc's Paint Shop Pro, can prove prohibitively expensive for digital photographers on a budget, but that doesn't mean you have to make do with the sub-standard software that came with your camera. Over the past year in particular, there has been a massive increase in the range and quality of freeware graphics tools available. It's now possible to get hold of excellent freeware tools covering all aspects of graphic creation, editing and publishing, from optimisation tools and photo effects suites, to complete image-editing tools packed with enough features to rival some of the commercial programs.

In this section we've brought together some of the best graphics-related freeware programs currently on the market. There are some powerful photo-editing and effects applications that digital photographers are sure to find useful, as well as more unusual tools, like the simple cartoon animation tool, Pivot. As ever, you'll find all of the programs under the relevant tab on this issue's main coverdisc.

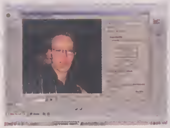
Adobe Photoshop Album 2.0 Starter Edition

One of the most notable advantages of digital photography is that once you've bought the original equipment, you can capture as many photos as you like without running up an expensive processing bill. This means it's easy for digital photographers to build up a large selection of pictures. In order to keep a growing photo collection organised, it's worth using the services of an image-management tool like Adobe's Photoshop Album. The good news is that you don't need to break into your photo-printing budget to buy the software, as Adobe has produced a cut-down freeware version to get you started.

Photoshop Album 2.0 Starter Edition offers the same attractive user interface and ease of use as the full version, providing you with all you need to organise and preview your images. The program comes equipped with simple image-editing options, enabling you to crop and rotate images, or remove red-eye from flash photography pictures. More advanced options are available in the commercial version of the program but the tools on offer in the Starter Edition should be adequate for minor amendments.



Photoshop Album Starter Edition makes it easy to browse through your digital photo collection



The program also includes simple editing options, such as a red-eye removal facility

Location **\graphics\psa2se_us.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.adobe.co.uk**

"IT'S ALSO POSSIBLE TO TAKE SCREENSHOTS OF YOUR DESKTOP"
sPix

sPix

This comprehensive image-management tool might not look much but it packs a lot into its simple interface. From the main interface you can browse through the images in your collection and make simple adjustments, such as resizing them or saving them out in different formats. Like most good-quality image viewers, sPix features a thumbnail preview mode, sPixThumbs, though you can also browse through images according to filename or image type.

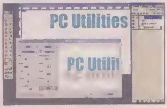
If you want to set the current image as your desktop wallpaper, you can select this from the main menu - you can specify whether it's centred, tiled or stretched. It's also possible to take screenshots of your desktop or make on-screen collages from your photo collection.

Location **\graphics\spixinstall.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://chesterway.co.uk**

3D Shadow

Photoshop offers a number of effects that can be applied to individual layers, including the option to add drop shadows to your image. Photoshop's shadow options are fairly limited though, and pale in comparison to those offered by 3D Shadow. This free plug-in enables users to control shadows in 3D, simulating virtually any light source. Shadows can even be offset or distorted for more unusual results.

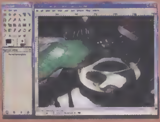
Location **\graphics\3dshadowsetup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.artistic-effects.com**



3D Shadow vastly expands upon the shadow options available in programs like Photoshop

The GIMP

The GNU Image Manipulation Program (GIMP) is one of the most powerful freeware image editing tools available, offering a wide range of tools and [illegible] for creating images and enhancing photos. One of the first things that many new users notice is the interface of the program. Instead of the usual contained program window, the software uses a selection of floating windows [illegible]. The [illegible] history, [illegible] and other sections float around the screen independently, meaning users have a [illegible]. This is [illegible] further by the ability to drag and drop sections of the various panels around the screen, forming a totally new interface arrangement.


The GIMP comes with a good selection of filters to give your images an unusual look

The GIMP has all the tools and options you'd expect to see in any self-respecting image manipulation program. In the main tool window you'll find the drawing tools, such as the pencil, paintbrush, airbrush, ink tools and so on, and you'll be able to access the shape tools, as well as fill, text and lasso. The main toolbar also houses the various scaling and rotation tools, which enable you to manipulate the image by playing around with its size and orientation. Continuing the image retouching theme, a selection of retouching tools is provided, which include a blur and sharpen tool, and smudge, burn and dodge functions. These can be very useful for making small refinements to images and can really make a difference when used well.

The GIMP handles layers [illegible], which can be accessed from the Layer panel. This panel contains a wealth of different options, and is a very important part of the program. The layer window presents a full list of the layers you currently have in the image. You can make layers invisible, [illegible] them, scale individual sections of the image and, should you need to, merge together all of the current layers. A useful tool when working with two different images (or frames of animation, for example) is the Opacity slide bar at the top of the window.

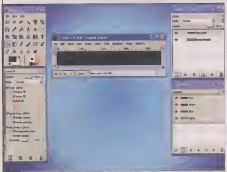
Unlike Photoshop, The GIMP's feature set can be expanded through the use of plug-ins. A great site to visit for GIMP plug-ins is The GIMP Plug-in Registry at **http://registry.gimp.org**. There are far too many [illegible] to [illegible], but you'll see that the [illegible] are split into various categories, including Render, Transform, Artistic and [illegible] or [illegible] The GIMP doesn't have, you [illegible].

Location **\graphics\gimp-2.2.0-i586-setup-1.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.gimp.org**

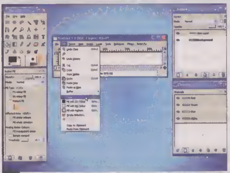
Installing The GIMP

Before you can install The GIMP itself, you'll first need to install the GTK+ library files, which you'll find on this issue's coverdisc, under the Graphics tab.

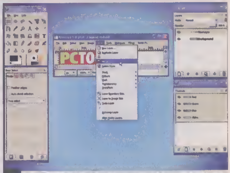
Create a Web banner animation with The GIMP



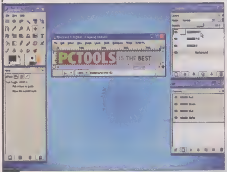
1 Create a new image at the correct size for a Web banner - around 468x60 pixels should be fine. Now put a thin black border around your image. To do this, first create a new transparent layer by selecting Layer/ New Layer and clicking Transparent. Choose the fill tool and fill with black.



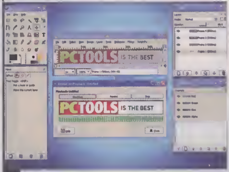
2 To finish off your border, choose Select/ Shrink and opt to Shrink the selection by 1 pixel. Now if you clear the current selection it will leave a 1 pixel black border around your image. Choose Edit/ Clear to remove the majority of the black colour you added in the previous step.



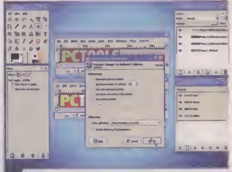
3 The next step is to add an image or logo to your animation. For this we've copied and pasted the PC Tools logo from another image. Now we need to merge this transparent layer with the background, as we no longer require two layers. Choose Layer/ Merge Down to do this.



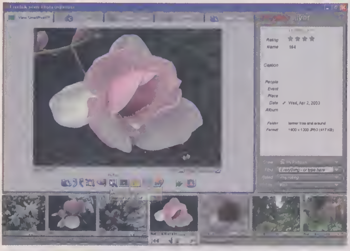
4 Reduce the Opacity down to around 60% so you'll be able to see all the layers of your animation at once. Create the first text layer by clicking on the Text button and writing 'is'. Use the move tool to position the text. Do the same for the other words.



5 The GIMP animator looks for how long, in milliseconds (ms), it should pause on each frame before moving on to the next. We've renamed each frame and added the delay for each in brackets. To test how the animation looks, choose Filters/ Animation/ Playback to show a preview window of your animation.



6 Before you save the finished animation, you should optimise it for the Web. First, choose Filters/ Animation/ Optimise (for GIF), and The GIMP will create a new streamlined animation. Now select Image/ Mode/ Indexed and reduce the Maximum Number Of Colours to 32, then choose No colour dithering.



Use the photo-editing buttons to enhance your photos in one click

Preclick Silver Photo Organiser

The Windows thumbnail folder view is a great way to quickly browse previews of your photos. It's also possible to display slideshows just as simply. However, if you have a large collection of photos, or if your photos are spread across many different folders, the built-in Windows XP features may not be enough. Luckily there are plenty of freeware programs that do a better job. One of the most stylish, well-presented and easy-to-use photo programs available is Preclick Silver Photo Organiser. This puts the fun back into organising your photos and even throws in some photo-editing features, too.

Preclick's intuitive interface is superb and it soon becomes second nature to scroll through your photos in the roll at the bottom of the screen. A larger preview of the currently selected image is shown above this, and a handful of editing options are available on buttons underneath. It's easy to organise photos into albums for printing or for arranging together, and with one click you can compress and email photos to friends. Additional features such as CD burning and batch photo labelling are available in the Gold version, which costs US$19.95.

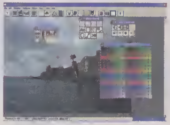
Location **\graphics\PreClickPhotoSetup2.5.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.preclick.com**

Brush Strokes Image Editor

Although you can choose from a wide variety of different image editors, most only offer features you've probably seen a dozen times before. Inevitably, you have to spend a lot of money to get the very latest image-editing tools and the most impressive effects. Brush Strokes, however, is a free editor that attempts to redress the balance by offering the sort of features usually reserved for off-the-shelf packages.

> **"IT'S TAKEN OVER A YEAR TO PUT THE PROGRAM TOGETHER AND THE EFFORT HAS DEFINITELY BEEN WORTH IT"**
>
> *Brush Strokes Image Editor*

It's taken over a year to put the program together and the effort has definitely been worth it. As well as providing all the standard tools you'd expect (magic wand selections, rotations and sharpen/blur), Brush Strokes offers a selection of professional tools, including a brush for painting and filling using an existing image. It also features a .gif animator and a series of powerful, yet easy-to-apply distortions and camera filters.



Use distortion to stretch any part of your image and create the desired effect

There are lots of filters you can apply to completely change the look of your photos

It's possible to capture images or frames of video directly from your digital camera for use with Brush Strokes, or you can simply work on your existing image files. Even though Brush Strokes offers up a plethora of potentially bewildering tools it's surprisingly straightforward to use and it won't be long before you feel at home with the program.

Location **\graphics\brush.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.pabird.supanet.com/~pabird/freesoftware/**

Awicons Lite

Awicons Lite is an advanced icon editor that has wide variety of effects and design tools. To create a new icon, stretch and rotate an image file to fit the edit area. You can then add the finishing touches by altering the brightness and saturation and applying various blur and shadow effects.

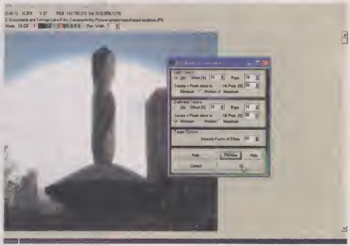
Location **\graphics\awiconslitesetup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.awicons.com**

EasyPeg

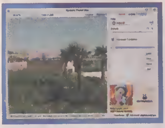
EasyPeg is a photo editor that offers a collection of tools for improving and organising images. The editing features enable you to perform tasks such as removing noise and reducing red-eye. It's also possible to transform your photos into water-colour paintings. In addition to all this, the program includes a handful of effects for fine-tuning the lightness/ darkness of your images. Many of the effects and filters of the program are fully customisable and will suit those who like to tinker around and experiment with different levels and settings.

EasyPeg crams in a number of extra graphics tools, too. It's possible to create different photo gallery layouts of your images for uploading to a website. EasyPeg produces the necessary HTML coding required so you don't need any programming knowledge. The suite also enables you to save different sets of photos into separate albums and to adjust the level of compression when saving .jpg images. Finally, EasyPeg features a screen-grabber function for saving an image of your desktop, and a movie player for .mpeg and .avi files.

Location **\graphics\EasyPegSetup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.hnm-freeware.com**



It is possible to apply strange lighting effects to your images using EasyPeg

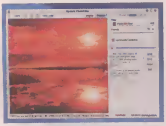

Using one of the more subtle filters can help enhance the mood of an image

Opanda PhotoFilter

Opanda PhotoFilter is an easy-to-use image-editing tool that can apply a range of filters to your digital images. The program incorporates more than 100 different colour effects that emulate the action of professional filters from Kodak, Cokin and Hoya.

Enhancing your images with Photo Filter is easy – all you need to do is load up the image you wish to tweak, select the colour filter you want to use from the drop-down menu and click the Apply arrow. There's a wide range of coloured filters built into the program and through trial and error you should be able to find one that suits your needs. A few of the filters are accompanied by text that explains how they affect different colours, but for the most part you'll just need to try each one to see the results.

The program is available in two versions, though the only difference between the two is the user interface. The version on this issue's coverdisc is Mac OS Aqua, but you can also download a Mac OS Panther-style version from the program's website.


Opanda Photo Filter can add coloured filters to your digital images for dramatic effect

Location **\graphics\PhotoFilter1.Oen_aqua.exe**
System **98/XP/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.opanda.com**

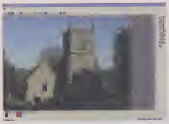
GifClean32

Like many file formats, .gifs incorporate a great deal of information that may not always be necessary, such as the program that was used to create the image. With GifClean32 you can easily strip out this extraneous information to trim down the file size of your animations and speed up website loading times.

Location **\graphics\gifclean26d.zip**
System **98/XP/NT**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://mharing.tripod.com/gifclean.html**

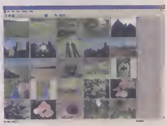
QV

QV is a simple freeware photo viewer and editor, designed with amateur digital photographers in mind. It works with a variety of file formats and enables users to create albums from a mixture of image file formats, including .bmp, .gif and .jpg. The program's photo albums display your images in a similar way to Windows Explorer's Thumbnail view, with the added advantage that you can alter the thumbnail size. To add photos to an album, all you have to do is choose a folder and all the images are then automatically added. Alternatively, you can select individual images by browsing to their location, or dragging and dropping them onto the album. When you double-click on a photo in an album it is automatically loaded into the QV program for editing.


QV provides a selection of popular photo effects and editing tools

The editor is useful for making basic changes to your photos. You can rotate them to the angle of your choice, and convert them to greyscale or black and white. It is also possible to change the number of colours to 16 or 256. The program includes a handful of photo effects too, including staples such as blur, emboss and enhance edges.

Location **\graphics\qv26.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **n/a**


The QV photo albums are a handy way to get an overview of your images

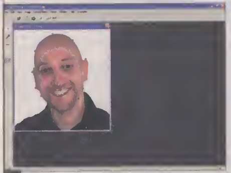
Sqirlz Morph

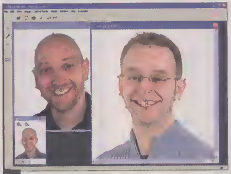
Sqirlz Morph is a fun free tool for creating morphing [illegible] which one images [illegible] to morph into another. This [illegible] been put [illegible] adverts featuring the faces of famous celebrities morphing [illegible] each other. Sqirlz Morph works with [illegible] e [illegible]kly [illegible]

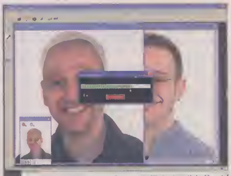
Location **\graphics\SqirlzMorph.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.sqirlz.com**

"SQIRLZ MORPH WORKS WITH ANY TWO IMAGES OF YOUR CHOICE"
Sqirlz Morph

Morph two images together using Sqirlz Morph


1 The first step is to load up the images that you want to morph between. Select File/ Open and load your first image. Now select the Add control points icon on the left and mark important reference point on the image, such as the corners of your subject's eyes, ears and mouth.


2 Now load up your second image. This will open with the control points from your first image in place. For your animation to work, you need to move these points so they correspond to the same features as those on your first image. Select the Move control points icon and make the necessary adjustments.


3 To preview how your animation will look, click Morph/ Run/Morph. If necessary, edit your control points or create more for a smoother animation. When you've finished, click Morph/ Make AVI File to output your animation as a video you can view in Media Player.

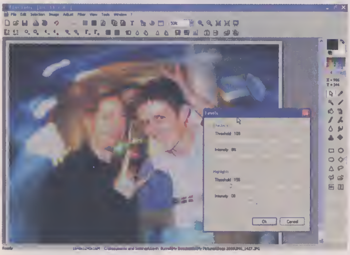
PhotoFiltre

If you've spent several hundred pounds on a new digital camera, the last thing you'll want to do is fork out another hundred on a top-notch image-editing suite. This doesn't mean you'll have to do without the tools of a photo editor though, because there are some superb freeware programs on the market, including the French freeware tool, PhotoFiltre.

For a freeware tool, PhotoFiltre offers a surprising range of features and provides most of the tools you'll require to touch up and enhance your photos. There is a comprehensive range of tweaking tools to adjust the colour, brightness and contrast of your images, including some more advanced options such as levels. As the program's name suggests, there's also a generous selection of built-in filters covering perennial favourites like artistic effects, blur and sharpen options, and texture filters. It even supports batch operations, meaning you can apply the same adjustments to a range of images at once.

Although the program lacks layer support and it's not always possible to preview effects before applying them, the suite's range of options and professional design make it one of the best freeware image editors we've seen.

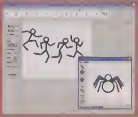
Location **\graphics\pf-setup-en.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.photofiltre.com**



Brightness, contrast and colour can be adjusted using tools such as the Levels option

> **"PIVOT IS A SIMPLE AND FREE ANIMATION PROGRAM"**
>
> *Pivot StickFigure Animator*

Pivot StickFigure Animator



By designing your own stick characters you can create more complex animations

The humble stickman is one of the first artistic forms children learn to draw. While lacking any fine features, this simple form of drawing is often the first step that artists take on the road to detailed and realistic drawing. Pivot is a simple and free animation program that enables users create this exact style of animation, provided you can animate each member in any way you wish by positioning the characters how you want them to [illegible] their [illegible] method you can build up your own stick animation. You can even create your own stick characters using the character creator. Once you've designed your animation, you can save it out as either a .gif animation or as a series of bitmaps, which you can then turn into a movie using other software.

Location **\graphics\Pivot.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.geocities.com/peter_bone_uk/**

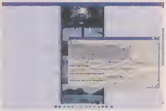
GraficSizer

Resizing a .jpg image often has a detrimental affect on its quality. GraficSizer enables you to preview the results of resizing an image to any size of your choice – you can then decide if it is worth doing. The program can also be used to convert between different image formats.

Location **\graphics\GSizer.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://chesterway.co.uk/**

JpgToFilm

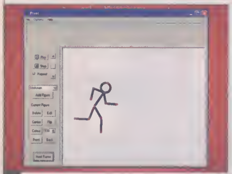
Whilst the program's name might suggest it's an image-to-video converter, JpgToFilm is in reality a much simpler but perhaps more interesting graphics tool. Via a simple three-step process, the program takes a batch of .jpg images and combines them into one image that's laid out like a film reel. The program requires no installation, so copy it to your hard drive before running it.



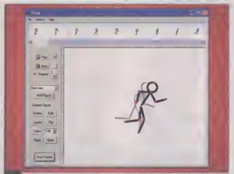
JpgToFilm stitches images together vertically in a mock film strip

Location **\graphics\JpgToFilm.exe**
System **98/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://atomic.digitalcreation.net**

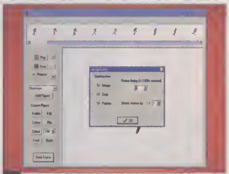
Create a simple animation with Pivot StickFigure Animator



1 After installing Pivot from the coverdisc, load up the program. You'll be greeted with a new project containing a lone stickman. Using the nodes (the red and orange dots) on the body, move your stickman into his starting position. Once he's ready, click the Next Frame button.



2 Now put the stickman into his new position by moving his limbs. You'll see a shadow that indicates the last position of the figure – this will help you animate the character accurately. When the stickman is in the new position, click Next Frame again and repeat the process to build up the animation.



3 Once you've stepped through the animation process and built up your complete scene, you can click the Play button to view it. Use the slide bar next to the Play and Stop buttons to change the playback speed. To save the animation out, select File/ Save Animation and choose your desired option.

Trout's GIF Optimiser

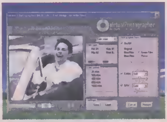
This is a small tool that can be used to create smaller images from existing .gif files. As well as the optimisation tool, it can also be used to convert other file formats to .gifs. If you work with Web images and need to preserve server space or speed up webpage display time, this could be a useful tool.

Location **\graphics\GIFOptzr.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.chemware.co.nz**

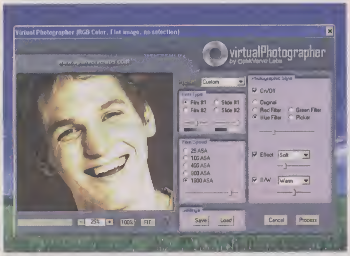
virtualPhotographer

Although most decent-quality image-editing programs come with a range of filters and effects built-in, the selection offered is usually quite limited and might not provide much in the way of manual adjustment. Such limitations aren't a problem with virtualPhotographer. This freeware Photoshop-compatible plug-in works with all the leading image-editing tools including Paint Shop Pro and Photoshop Elements. It brings together dozens of easy-to-apply preset filters that can be used to transform even the most uninspiring of pictures. Whether you want to give your photos an authentic aged look, add film grain to pictures, or use a Hollywood-style soft focus in your images, virtualPhotographer can help.

After installing the program to your image editor's plug-ins folder, you can select virtualPhotographer from the optikVerve Labs section in the Filters/Effects list. Preset effects can be selected from the drop-down menu, or you can use the options on the right to create your own effect. Every one of the preset effects can be manually adjusted to help you achieve the exact look you desire. Elements of different effects can even be used in conjunction with each other.


The presets on offer include various soft-focus effects and filters to create antique-looking images

Location **\graphics\virtualPhotographer.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.optikvervelabs.com**

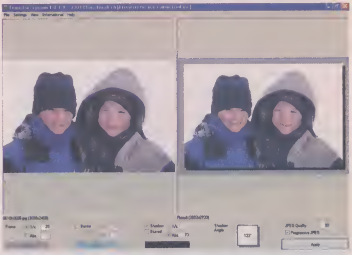


Preset effects can be adjusted using the options on the right, giving users more flexibility

FrameFun

Whilst digital camera owners generally end up taking many more pictures than they ever did with their old film cameras, far fewer of those images are ever printed. Browsing through the family photo album is now just as likely to involve viewing images on a PC screen as it is flicking through a photo album. Whilst this may be equally as convenient, it means you miss out on personal touches such as custom photo frames.

> **"EVERY ONE OF THE PRESET EFFECTS CAN BE MANUALLY ADJUSTED"**
>
> *virtualPhotographer*



Simple frames and shadow effects can be added to your digital photographs

FrameFun is a very easy way to add frames to your digital images without tinkering with a complex image-editing tool. All you need to do is load up the image you wish to frame, select from the options at the bottom of the screen and click Apply to see a preview of your framed image.

If you have a large number of images that you'd like to frame, you can also make use of the program's Batch Processing option. First, select the frame options you wish to use as you would for a single image. With that done, go to File/Batch Processing and select Source Files to select the images you want to edit. Then simply select a target directory to save your framed files to and click OK.

Location **\graphics\FFSetup-1.0.4.9.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.hochstrasser.org wiki/pmwiki.php**

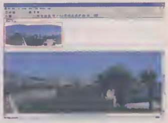
The Panorama Factory

A number of more advanced image-editing tools provide users with the option to stitch overlapping photos together into a seamless panorama. Few freeware image-editing suites offer this option, so you'll instead need to use a dedicated program like The Panorama Factory. Although the commercial version is now up to 3.3, the program's maker has made version 1.2 available as freeware.

The freeware version of The Panorama Factory lacks some of the finesse of its shareware equivalent, and there's no step-by-step wizard to guide you through the proceedings. However, if your needs are relatively modest, you should find it easy to use and capable of good results.

In order to use the program, simply import the images you want to stitch together into the program and then rearrange them into the order required. Next, just click the Stitch button and the program will do all the hard work for you. If the results aren't perfect first time round, you can adjust settings such as the focal length and the film size of the camera used to capture the images in order to a achieve better outcome.

Location **\graphics\pf1p6.exe**
System **98/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.panoramafactory.com**


The Panorama Factory is a simple tool for stitching overlapping photographs together

Miscellaneous

When it comes to commercial software, you can guarantee that the most numerous applications will be those that appeal to as wide a market as possible. When it comes to freeware software, however, it's less important how many people use the software because the developers don't receive a license fee for every copy installed. This helps to explain why the freeware scene is so incredibly diverse – if you need a program to perform a very specific function, someone has probably created a freeware tool to meet your need.

In this section of the magazine, we've brought together some of the more unusual yet useful freeware tools currently on the market. We've aimed to cater to a wide range of tastes with our selection of tools to keep track of text notes, organise your recipe collection, manage your home finances and even plan your next holiday. We've also included some of the best freeware educational tools available, so whether you want to brush up on your foreign language skills or improve your touch typing speed, we've got programs to help you along.

If you don't find the tools you're after in this section, don't worry, tracking down tools to meet your unusual requirements may not be as difficult as you think. If you turn to page 60 you'll find our guide to some of the best freeware download and information sites, where you can continue your search.

GlobalSpellChecker

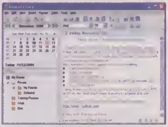
When you're typing information into Web forms or using a specialised program, you may miss the services of a spell checker. With GlobalSpell Checker installed however, you can make use of Microsoft Word's spell-checking capabilities no matter what programming you're using. Simply copy the text you wish to check to the clipboard then run the program.

Location **\misc\GSInstall.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.shapius.com**

Advanced Diary

Advanced Diary is a simple and effective way of keeping track of your day-to-day life with little fuss. Its major role is that of a journal, complete with the ability to separate topics into individual folders (such as work, holiday, romance etc). This structure means that the program can store multiple diaries in a single database file – not something many other programs can do.

Along with the diary features, the program has a built-in calendar and a document tree viewing mode for easy reference and access. Complementing all of this is a full set of text formatting and font tools, and the ability to use hyperlinks to connect entries together, creating a fully interactive document.



It may be simple, but this is a very useful and efficient diary application

Location **\misc\AdvDiary.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.csoftlab.com**

Simplebean Health Guide

Whether you're planning to go on a diet or you simply want to keep in shape and watch the calories, Simplebean Health Guide is a useful program to have. Using this lifestyle guide, you can quickly calculate your health levels and plan your fitness regime. To help plan your perfect diet, the program can work out your Body Mass Index (BMI) and Basal Energy Expenditure (BEE) as well as your personal daily calorie intake levels. The program is also able to break down your everyday food consumption into individual groups, such as carbohydrates, protein and fat.

"YOU CAN QUICKLY CALCULATE YOUR HEALTH LEVELS AND PLAN YOUR FITNESS REGIME"

Simplebean Health Guide

To help you further you can use the program to access a range of helpful online articles on dieting and healthy living, encompassing both the mind and body.

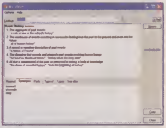
Location **\misc\SbHG.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.simplebean.com**

WordWeb

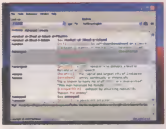
WordWeb is a simple but powerful English dictionary and thesaurus that's very easy to use. You can search through the root directory of over 150,000 words for definitions and synonyms, as well as links to a range of related words.

The program can be used with almost any Windows application, and you can look up words from practically any program. The program now features usage examples for many words, the option to hide vulgar entries, add lookup words to custom dictionaries, and a massively improved punctuation database.

Location **\misc\wordweb.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://wordweb.info**



WordWeb can be used with almost any Windows program, so you can look up words at all times



Pardon offers an extensive list of word definitions and reference snippets

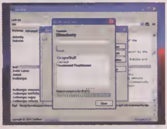
Pardon

Although word processing programs like Microsoft Word usually include a dictionary, this is simply for spelling purposes and doesn't provide word definitions like a standard dictionary. If you'd like access to word definitions from the comfort of your desktop, then you need the essential reference tool, Pardon.

This freeware application is part dictionary and part encyclopaedia, offering snippets of information on people, places, plants and animals, as well as thousands of word definitions. It also offers a number of useful tools that go beyond the facilities of a standard dictionary. For example, by setting up a list of words and their foreign language translations, you can easily create a vocabulary test to further your knowledge.

Pardon has also been designed to easily accept new language dictionaries, which can be downloaded and installed directly from the program website. By means of these updates you could add an English-French translation dictionary to the program, for example, or even translate between Swedish and Norwegian. New dictionaries and input languages are being added all the time, making Pardon an essential tool for any budding multilinguist.

Location **\misc\pardon.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.softbear.no**

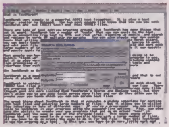


By setting up a word list you can even test your translation skills

TextMorph

Working with large numbers of text and .html files can be daunting, especially if you need to make the same change to multiple documents. Performing a find and replace action on a collection of letters for example, is a time consuming task. The creator of TextMorph has realised this and has created the program to help alleviate this problem.

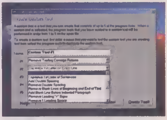
TextMorph is an ASCII text formatting tool that comes with a range of features not usually found in such a program. Included in these features is a very useful text-to-HTML (and vice versa) converter that will automatically insert HTML code into any document. The Find and Replace function can be used by the word or paragraph (on multiple files at once) and there's the very handy addition of an email cleanup tool, which is very useful for removing forwarding arrows from messages. There's also a range of basic formatting tools such as line spacing options, capitalisation tools and carriage return cleanups.



Converting any text document into HTML formatting is as easy as pressing a button

Although it may seem like a very simplistic text editor at first, TextMorph has plenty of great extras that will be of use to many PC users.

Location **\misc\TextMorph21xp2000.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.laughandlift.com**



If you need to, you can create your own custom formatting rules using the built-in settings

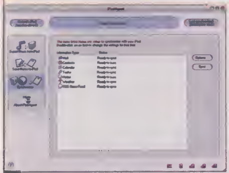
iPod Agent

You can carry around your appointments, diary and contact database on your iPod by outputting them from any software that exports in .ics (calendar) or .vcf (contact) file formats. For example, Outlook Express can export Address Book contacts to .vcf files. Just click the Address Book icon, select a contact and go to File/ Export/ Business Card, then save it to iPod's Contacts folder. Unfortunately, this has to be done one contact at a time.

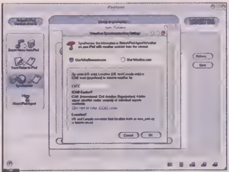
Outlook is a much more powerful program than Outlook Express, and handles email, contacts, notes, appointments, tasks and to do lists. In order to export this information to your iPod though, you'll need to employ the services of a dedicated utility, such as iPod Agent. this program can transfer all your emails, contacts, calendar tasks and notes so you can view them when you're away from the computer. One important point here is that you should start Outlook and minimise it before you start iPod Agent - the program can't synchronise information if you run it on its own.

Location **\misc\ipodagent071.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.ipodsoft.com**

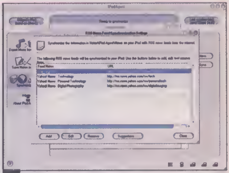
Synchronise Outlook with your iPod using iPod Agent



1 Start Outlook and minimise the program to the Taskbar. Now run iPod Agent and it will fill the sync list with Mail, Contacts, Calendar, Tasks, and Notes. Select Mail and click the Options button to choose how many days' worth of mail you wish to download. Seven is the default figure.



2 iPod Agent can also download local weather reports from the Internet. Select Weather and click Options. Start Internet Explorer and go to www.airport-technology.com/icao-codes/. Find the code for your nearest airport and enter it. Ours is EGCC, which is Manchester.



3 To download the latest news stories to your .mp3 player, select RSS News Feeds and click Options. Click Add to enter the URL manually, or click the Suggestions button and tick one of the predefined Yahoo! news feeds. Now just click the Sync button to finish.

Free Notes

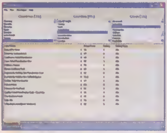
If you have trouble remembering appointments or you often forget about the small tasks of the day, then Free Notes will be of use. Using this small application you can create multi-coloured notes on your PC, which will display right away or can be set to appear at set times to remind you.

Location **\misc\freenotes.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.freebienotes.com**

Hotel Scout

Hotel Scout is another tool for finding suitable accommodation for your holidays. This service can search a huge resource of possible locations for your ideal room, saving you the time of looking through endless brochures or phone books.

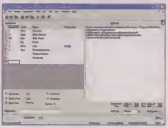
Using the simple system, you can search for a hotel by selecting the country, county and city and then selecting one of the results displayed. This will reveal information about the hotel, including a photo, location description and price. From here you can also check the availability of rooms and can proceed to book the room should you wish to stay in the chosen location.



Simply double-click the location options and then select the hotel that suits you – easy

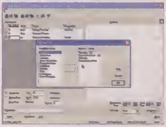
Location **\misc\HotelScout_107.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://hotelscout.scoutaround.com**

Soft Cuisine



Each recipe stored in the database lists all the ingredients you need and detailed instructions to follow

Soft Cuisine is a complete package for storing and managing your collection of recipes. Upon installation, you'll find the program comes with a selection of 30 recipes for you to choose from, split into a variety of categories. Of course, you're not limited to this selection of starters – you can easily add your own entries to the database by clicking Recipe/ New. Adding recipes to the database is a matter of simply entering the necessary ingredients – including quantities and how they should be prepared – and typing out instructions on how to achieve the desired results. You can even add further information, such as whether the recipe is vegetarian or gluten free, and the calories or cost per serving.



You can filter out recipes containing specific ingredients or select meals based on the time you have available

What makes Soft Cuisine particularly useful is its excellent search facility. Rather than locating recipes in your database purely via name, you can search by the ingredients you have available, making it an excellent tool for planning meals. It's even possible to exclude recipes containing certain ingredients – if your dinner party guests are allergic to specific food types, for example – or filter recipes by calorie count, cost or difficulty.

Location **\misc\softc200.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://mediaweb.start.at**

Travelaxe

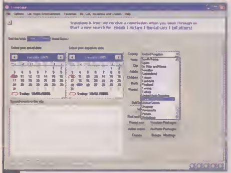
We all know how tricky searching for a hotel can be when planning a holiday. Not only do you need to find a quality place to stay, but you'll also want to find the best deal. While no one can promise your hotel will be clean and cosy, help getting the right price is at hand, thanks to Travelaxe.

Travelaxe enables you to search locations around the world for any available hotels. Simply enter the location (city) you plan to visit along with details on your party (adults and children), and the program will search a range of travel websites for you, detailing the available options and the relevant prices. Once results are found, you can view details of the hotel, prices, a map of the local area and a general rating of the room. Should you find a hotel you wish to stay at, you can then proceed to book the room by selecting the Book It! Option within the program. Finding a hotel room need never be a hassle ever again.

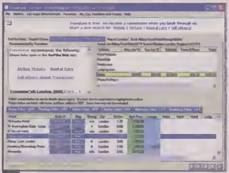
Travelaxe can even find decent places to stay in sunny Macclesfield!

Location **\misc\TravelaxeSetup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.travelaxe.com**

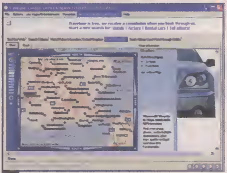
Plan a holiday with Travelaxe



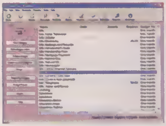
1 To begin your search for a place to stay, you'll need to enter some details. Enter the location where you wish to stay, as well as the relevant dates, how many people you're with (adults and children) and the number of rooms you need. Then click Full Search to begin the process.



2 After a while the program will display a list of available hotels in the area you've chosen. Each will be listed alongside price information, as well as a rating for room quality. To book a room, click the Book It! button next to the hotel of your choice.



3 There's no need to worry about directions to your hotel, as Travelaxe is able to display a detailed map of the area, thanks to links to the MSN mapping service. To access this simply click the Map button next to the hotel entry in your search results.



Everything from paying the rent to stocks and shares can be tracked with AceMoney Lite

AceMoney Lite

If you need to keep a tight rein on your spending, and want to know exactly where you money is going, then this powerful finance helper will be very useful indeed. Using the program you can easily keep an eye on all your incoming and outgoings, such as spending, bills, and even stocks and shares.

Over 100 currencies are supported, there's a wide range of transaction options and you can password protect your information for added security. Information can be imported from other packages (using formats such as .qif and .ofx), and all sorts of bar charts and graphs are available for easy viewing of your assets. There's also a loan calculator and a mortgage analyser, rounding off what is a very powerful, free application.

Location **\misc\AceMoneyLiteSetup.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.mechcad.net**

SoftBanking Lite

SoftBanking Lite is a straightforward and easy-to-use home accountancy application that will enable you to keep track of all your hard-earned cash. This Lite incarnation of the tool includes most of the commercial version's options, such as multiple accounts, transaction category assignments, charts, filters and password protection.

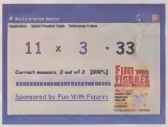
SoftBanking Lite is a great way to monitor your spending and outgoings

> "AS WELL AS THE BASIC TYPING TUTORING AND TESTING THERE'S AN INTEGRATED COLLECTION OF TEXTS"
>
> *MaxType LITE Typing Tutor*

The interface is XP-themed and isn't bogged down by a vast array of options, making this a great tool for people who simply want to keep tabs on their monthly earnings.

Location **\misc\SoftBankingLite120.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.illusionsoft.net**

Multiplication Master



Brush up on your multiplication skills with Multiplication Master

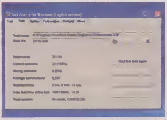
Multiplication Master is an educational aid, which can be used to help users learn multiplication tables through a series of games. You answer various questions based on the different multiplication tables and the program will keep a record of your score.

There's a random test option that will give you questions from all tables, or you can opt to practice one table in particular. To aid you there's also a quick reference section so you can brush up on your skills before taking the tests. With all these features on offer for nothing, Multiplication Master is a great learning tool for all ages.

Location **\misc\multiplicationmaster.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://funwithfigures.com/multiplication-master**

Test Znaniy

The oddly named Test Znaniy is a language tool that can be used to help students in learning a large selection of foreign words – particularly words with accents, such as German umlauts. Using various word lists, you can revise the selected list and can then proceed to test yourself using the timed quiz section, which keeps track of your score and overall progress.



Learn those hard to remember foreign word with Test Znaniy

Tests can be performed on a full list, random entries or just on the items you find the most difficult. The detailed report of your tests is a great aid to anyone currently studying another language, and should be a great help in your course.

Location **\misc\tz15e.exe**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **http://antol.msk.ru**

Foreign Language Game Collection

This is a useful collection of fun educational games all geared towards learning foreign languages. Using the different games users can beef up their language knowledge in a more entertaining way than simply looking at lists of words or phrases and answering questions.

Bathroom
Clothing
clean-out

This puzzle game involves dragging words into their correct categories

Games include a puzzle game in which you need to drag the correct words into a category, a Space Invaders-themed word guessing game, a multiple choice quiz and a Tetris-style typing exercise.

Several languages are supported and there's even a lesson editor included so you can create your own tests and word lists.

Location **\misc\folanga.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.foreignlanguagehome.com**

MaxType LITE Typing Tutor

MaxType is a very effective typing tutor with plenty of useful options

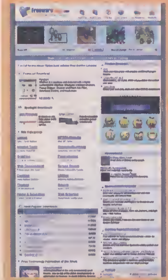
If you want to improve you typing skills – either to get that new job, or simply to bang out emails at a faster pace – you'll find this tool very useful. By using any .txt file, you can take typing tests, and can time yourself on how you do. After you perform a few tests you'll be able to see how much you've improved over time by competing against your past self. This 'Extreme Typing' mode is an excellent performance boosting tool, and is one of the best features in the application.

As well as the basic typing tutoring and testing there's an integrated collection of texts, including a selection of lessons that will help you improve and even a selection of coding lessons that will help programmers boost their typing skills.

Location **\misc\MaxType_lite.zip**
System **98/Me/XP/NT/2000**
Notes **Freeware**
Contact **www.askmesoft.com**

Websites

FreewareFiles www.freewarefiles.com



FreewareFiles is one of the best presented Freeware download sites

FreewareFiles is a regularly updated site, which is dedicated to the very best freeware products available. As its name suggests, the site deals only in freeware programs and doesn't include any shareware or product demos. Each program in this large collection has a user rating (out of five) to give you an indication of what others who downloaded the software thought. On the homepage is a Featured Download section, which is a frequently changed and specially selected recommended release that you can be certain is worth taking the time to download.

To make it easier to keep up to date with the latest freeware releases you can opt to receive a free weekly FreewareFiles Express newsletter. This features details of new freeware releases, including an elite selection of Editor's Picks, which are what are considered to be the best new freeware programs in each category.

FreewarePalm

www.freewarepalm.com

If you own a PalmOS-powered PDA, you're sure to find this download site invaluable. It contains hundreds of programs and utilities for your PDA, most of which are free of charge. It's just as simple to use as most freeware sites specialising in Windows software, and it categorises its software library in a similar way. The categories used are carefully defined and range from graphics and utilities to more obscure sections such as astronomy, hobbies and religion. As with other download sites, users are encouraged to share opinions about the programs on offer by entering user ratings out of five.

Don't be put off by FreewarePalm's homepage, which is mostly used as an advertising space for a variety of different PalmOS tools. Simply click on one of the categories on the left-hand-side to replace the adverts down the middle with an extensive list of suitable programs.

FREEWARE 4PC
RealOne SUPERPASS
FreewarePalm

FreewarePalm is a worthwhile site to visit if you're a PalmOS user

The Freeware Network

www.fwnetwork.com

The Free Network is a site that believes in the old adage of quality over quantity. In many of the sections you'll find only half a dozen or so programs, but it's a safe bet that each is worth getting your hands on. While the website doesn't get updated as often as many of the others, you can rely on new additions being amongst the best new programs around.

The Freeware Network

The Freeware Network is a good resource for program skins and Windows themes

The Freeware Network splits its software collection into Themes and Skins and other Freeware applications. Contrary to its policy with general Freeware software, it has an endless supply of themes and skins to offer, so if you want to get hold of a skin for Winamp or a new theme for Windows XP, this is the place to come. So, treat your PC to a free new look while taking advance of some of the best freeware programs available.

Kids Freeware www.kidsfreeware.com

Most websites offering freeware downloads feature programs aimed at adult users. This site, however, bucks the trend by dedicated its focus to software for children. Its colourful design is appealing to kids, and the content of the programs it features is guaranteed to be suitable for your little ones. The website's download links are checked regularly to ensure they continue to point to child-friendly content, and any advertising displayed is vetted to ensure it's suitable for children.

Kids Freeware is run by two people in their spare time and is currently visited by over 3,000 children and parents every day. Its generous selection of programs is split into sections including Lots of fun and Computer and Web, with subsections covering everything from Surfing the Web to Pranks, Jokes and CyberPets. As well as this, there is also a special section for parents only, offering a selection of teaching tools and parental control software.

KIDS FREEWARE

Kids Freeware is a colourful site, which is dedicated to child-friendly software

Top Quality Freeware

www.topqualityfreeware.com

The problem with freeware is there is no guarantee it will remain available for very long. Freeware writers rarely make a profit from their work, save from donations, yet they have to pay for the Web space to host their software on the Net, for advertising, and so on. As a result, some freeware only remains available while the software maker remains enthusiastic enough to continue offering it for a free download. Inevitably, hundreds of freeware programs are available one minute and gone the next – either lost forever, or to be re-released as shareware in the next update. Top Quality Freeware addresses the problem of getting hold of quality freeware by copying the best programs to a separate archive. It offers access to this library of freeware gems to members only, who pay a small fee to join the service.

Top Quality Freeware is a subscription-based archive of freeware tools

The site isn't exclusively for members only. Non-members can make use of it to source software and download it from the homepages of the software, where they still exist.

Pricelessware

Pricelessware

"the best of the best in Freeware"

Brought to you by the members of alt.comp.freeware

Welcome...

The Pricelessware list is a compilation of software collected through a yearly vote by the participants of the "alt.comp.freeware" newsgroup. It is a list of what people have voted as *"the best of the best in Freeware"*

The software listed here is commonly referred to as "Pricelessware", a term given with great respect and thanks to the authors of these programs for giving us such wonderful quality freeware programs

So without further delay, we present you with
2004's Pricelessware of the year!

(12) Business-Home
(38) File Utilities
(12) Organizers
(20) Security
(61) Internet
(16) Text

Desktop (8)
Graphics (19)
Multimedia (15)
Web Design (13)
Programming (19)
System Utilities (38)
Alphabetical index (262)

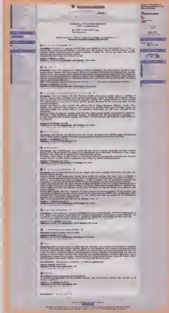
...Thank you for visiting

Pricelessware summarises the best freeware program on offer, as voted for by alt.comp.freeware users

The number of freeware programs being released every week means that the selection of gratis tools available is ever increasing. Of course, not all of this software is great, but some applications are at least as good as commercially available programs. The very best freeware is some of the best software obtainable and could easily be described as priceless. Pricelessware is the cream of the crop of freeware from 1999 to the present day. The list has been voted for by users of the alt.comp.freeware newsgroup so these are the opinions of people who care about freeware software.

The elite software in the list represent the best free software you can get. The focus is on individual programs, rather than general categories, and software supported by adware and spyware has been excluded since the site's inception. The definitive list of 2005's pricelessware should be updated on the site very soon.

Freeware Arena



Freeware Arena has a strict definition of freeware that programs must meet to be included on the site

On the homepage of this website is a manifesto from website owner, Scott Williams, which offers his cast iron guarantee that everything on the site is freeware. Scott's definition of freeware rules out anything with adware, spyware or malware of any kind. His manifesto is backed up by a charter (you can read this on the site's forum) for what he calls a Freeware Revolution. This is a rallying cry for people to join forces to help promote and educate about real freeware. If you're passionate about ad-free software you'll find plenty of other enthusiasts here, but even if you just want to get hold of a great hand-picked selection of some of the best freeware tools around, get yourself over to the Freeware Arena.

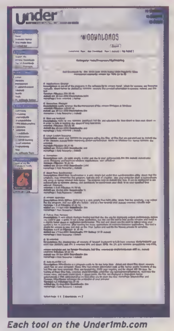
One of the key matters of importance for Scott is honesty, so you can trust the descriptions on his site. Each program is carefully detailed, and, like many of the better sites, the emphasis of Freeware Arena is on providing quality rather than padding out the site with less deserving products.

Under1mb.com

www.under1mb.com

Under1mb.com is a very useful website, particularly if you're short on disk space, use a dial-up modem, or prefer lightweight software stripped of bulky excess. The website is inspired by Scott William's Freeware Arena and shares the same ethos regarding what constitutes freeware. Consequently, you won't find any adware or spyware here, and the layout of the site is also very similar to Freeware Arena. Elmar Wenners, who runs the site, encourages software writers to submit useful tools that are less than 1MB in size. If they're good enough, they'll make it into this database of small but useful utilities.

As well as a good selection of system utilities, there is a large collection of games in different categories, ranging from puzzles and adventures to a small selection of games written by Elmar himself. If you want to stock up on great quality games and applications without filling up your hard drive, this is the place to come.



Each tool on the Under1mb.com sites will fit on a floppy disk and every program is freeware

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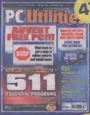
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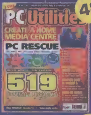
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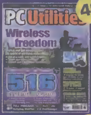
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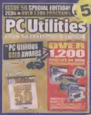
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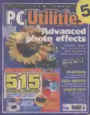
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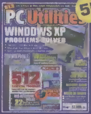
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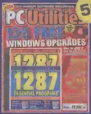
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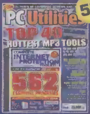
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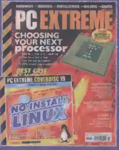
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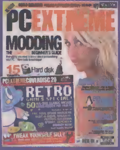
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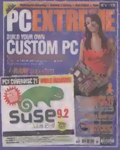
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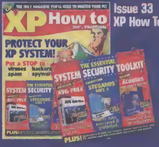
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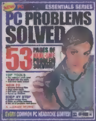
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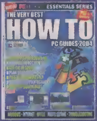
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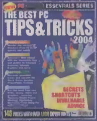
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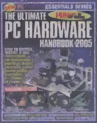
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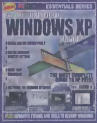
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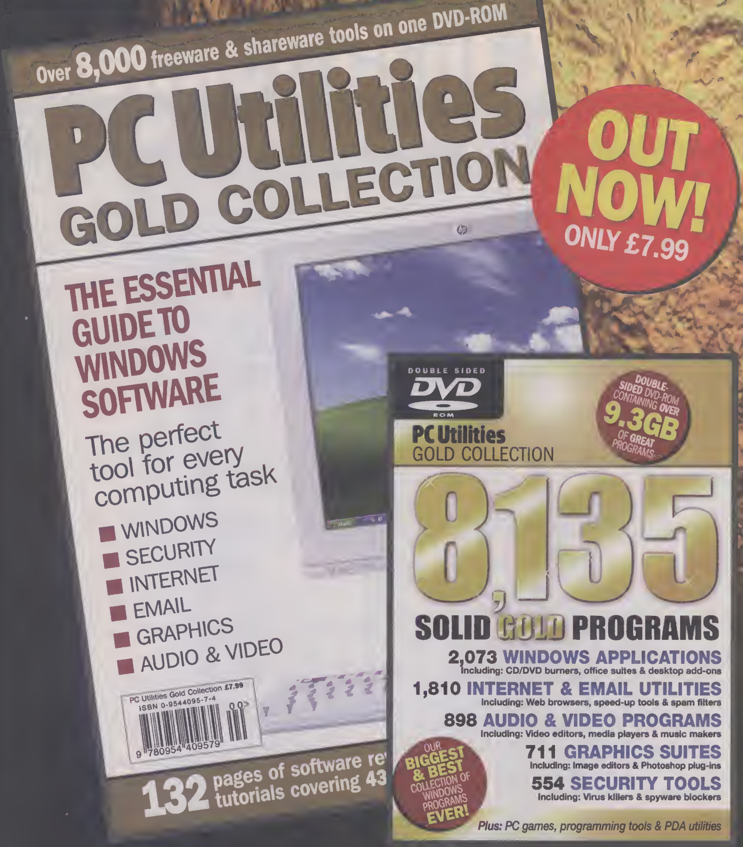
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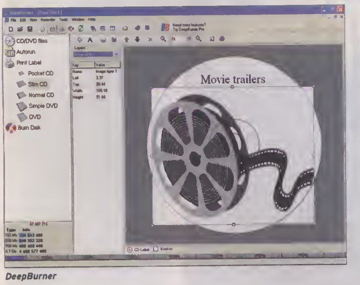

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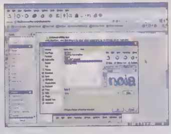

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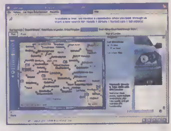

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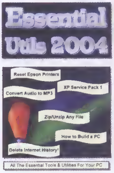
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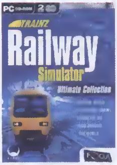
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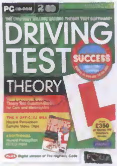
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